
BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

MARGARET:

A STORY OF LIFE IN A PRAIRIE HOME.

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O X L E Y .

BY

LYNDON,

AUTHOR OF "MARGARET: A STORY OF LIFE IN A PRAIRIE HOME."

"There are no shadows where there is no sun:
There is no beauty where there is no shade:
And all things in two lines of glory run,
Darkness and light, ebon and gold, inlaid."

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TO .

My Father :

BUT FOR WHOM MY STORY WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN

WRITTEN.

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OXLEY.

CHAPTER I.

OXLEY AND ITS SURROUNDINGS.

ONE might seek far, and not find anything prettier than the village of Oxley with its surroundings. It lies on the sunny side of Emerald Lake, than which nothing was ever more aptly named, for the gem itself is not more sparkingly green; and many of the lawns and gardens, for which Oxley is famous, slope to its brink, as the principal street runs parallel with its gently curving southern shore. Two rugged, scarred faces look down upon it from the north. Gray and rugged they are, in spite of the lichens and mosses and ferns and little evergreens that peer bravely out of every rift and seam, and cling to the bare rocks. But, standing apart in solitary grandeur, they grant a glimpse of the greenly-wooded hill behind, that comes slowly down to their abrupt base, and creeps in between them, in the greenest of grass, to the water's edge.

Further on towards the west, other hills, kept in the background by these grim "Brothers," come into nearer view, and at length open to embrace a bit of the lake, forming a curious little basin known as Black Pool, and so precipitous are the protecting heights, that only adventurous sunbeams ever find it. "The Gate," as the entrance to Black Pool is called, is scarcely wide enough for one rowboat to pass through, except with trailing oars; and on either side stand slight pinnacles of rock, like sentinels set to guard it.

Having made Emerald Lake as pretty as possible, the hills seem to have no other interest in existence, and speedily melt into the fields stretching far away to the higher range that pierces the western sky.

One of the beauties of the lake is a little island that lies not far from The Gate. It is rocky and wild, and crowned with evergreens, and above them rises a small square tower, roughly

built of unhewn stones, but with sufficient resemblance to the turret of a castle to have a very picturesque effect, and it has a quaint, sad story of its own.

Any one who knew Jacques Muller before his troubles came might tell how manly and true-hearted he was, how handsome and clever, and would tell, with indignant sorrow, how he was shamefully jilted by Laura Parr, the doctor's pretty daughter, and how the shock unsettled his reason.

At first the only tokens were his losing all memory of the circumstances of his loss, and his wandering about inquiring for Laura. The greatest sympathy was felt for him, and the doctor set no limit to his devotion. He would have no restraint put upon his movements, maintaining that perfect freedom was needful to his recovery, and so Jacques went and came as his poor wandering brain led him, and everybody was his friend.

But by-and-by he began to adopt odd fancies in dress, and did strange things, and his sad story having come to be an old one to the boys of the village, they fell to playing him tricks—slyly, knowing well that if it came to the doctor's ears they would suffer for it—and to torment and make sport of him, until at last he grew morose, and took refuge on the island, where he built a little stone hut for his shelter and home. Finding that even this solitude was frequently invaded by his tormenters, he added another story to his rough dwelling, showing great ingenuity and strength. He built it high enough above the trees to form a convenient lookout, with loopholes for that purpose, and there, day after day, he kept watch for the approach of his enemies, and as surely as a boat came in sight, he failed not to let his missiles fly thick and fast; and, more than once, would-be marauding boys were glad to abandon their mischief, to save their heads.

Jacques had one staunch and trusted friend among the boys, who got into many a fight in his behalf. He and Henry Hollister had been friends a long time before his trouble came, their temperaments and tastes being wonderfully congenial. Jacques had given Henry lessons on the violin, and they had read and talked together like brothers, unmindful of the disparity in their ages, and now Henry was welcome in Jacques' stronghold, and the willing bearer of the generous supplies provided by the doctor and kind friends for his comfort; and to him Jacques confided the secret of an iron box, containing his treasures, which was buried near the tower, and was to be his when Jacques died.

In course of time, the Hollisters moved from Oxley to New York, and poor Jacques missed his one friend so sadly that he became restless and unsettled, and would wander away secretly, at first for days, then for weeks, always finding his lonely home

well supplied with necessaries when he came back to it; but at length he seemed to have deserted it altogether, and his story came to be told as a sort of legend of the island.

As to the people of Oxley, there are the usual varieties, the good, bad and indifferent; the rich, the well-to-do and the "ne'er do weel;" but one might safely judge that there is a decided predominance of the better elements, from the tone of taste and thrift that prevails.

At the head of the lake, a little distance from the main street, stands the house of Mr. Alexander Craighead, which, in its rather imposing proportions and somewhat old-time air without, is sure to suggest a great deal of comfort within; and one's expectations could hardly be disappointed. A wide hall opens upon wide piazzas at the front and back, with a view of the lawn and lake, the village, the southern hills and the sunset from one, and the sunrise hills from the other. Rooms open from the hall on either side with double doors, giving a pleasant impression of space and bright coloring, and windows open upon piazzas, grassy banks, and flower-beds; and there are books, pictures, happy faces and cheerful voices. There are flowers without end—great beds of roses, beds of heliotrope and verbenas, and beds where all the bright colors are massed; and there are wide-spreading shade-trees, far enough from the house not to shut away one sunbeam that should rest upon it.

These are some of the many charms of this home—its summer charms, for this is a summer picture of Oxley. But there are those who would find it hard to choose between Oxley and its surroundings, its hills and fields and woods, in their summer robes of green, or their winter whiteness; and with blazing wood-fires in the hall and library, the windows in warm draperies, and the faces and voices to add their brightness, the house loses little, if anything, by the coming of winter.

Mr. Craighead brought his bride to this lovely home, and for many years their lives were almost unclouded. Everything Mr. Craighead undertook prospered, their children all lived to grow up, the sons were graduated creditably from college, and settled advantageously—Alexander in Oxley, William in New York, and Johnston in London. The only daughter, Edith, was the pride of her parents and brothers, and of the village as well. But at length a great grief befell them.

When Alexander had been married some thirteen or fourteen years, it became evident that his wife's health was failing; the doctors advised a winter in Italy, or the South of France, and the advice was at once acted upon. The children, of whom there were four, Alexandra, Richard, Johnston and Cornelia,

were left with their grandparents, and their father and mother went to Europe, taking Edith with them. The invalid's health improved beyond all their hopes, and at the end of a year they sailed for home. But the steamer never reached America. While their friends were waiting with joyful impatience to welcome them, tidings came of the awful calamity.

There seems to be no limit to the weight of pain human hearts can bear. They throb on when every pulse seems a mortal pang, and the dull routine of life, hardly delayed, is resumed while the sufferers wonder how many more throbs can be endured, and while they wonder, Time's marvellous healing-power begins to be felt, when smiles and cheerful words come with an effort. By-and-by days become endurable, and then the sorrow is hidden, only to be looked upon in secret and sacred times and places, and to give an undertone of sadness and incompleteness to the best life can offer.

CHAPTER II.

THREE GENERATIONS.

LATE one winter's day, a little more than two years after the wreck that brought such grief to the Craigheads' home, Mrs. Craighead sat by the fire in the hall, when her husband, and her son William, who was making one of his frequent brief visits, came in from a sleigh-ride.

"It is worth while to have been out for a couple of hours, to find such a fire when we come home," said William, seating himself to enjoy it.

"It is pleasant, isn't it?" replied his mother. "I came down to look for the children, and it lured me into a reverie, a long one too, I am afraid."

"I am more and more of the opinion, mother, that there is no place like this dear old home. I often think of it with real longing, in the whirl of my busy life. Perhaps I may come to Oxley to spend a serene old age."

"It will be when you are old, my son, if ever, I fear, for you are too fond of New York to forsake it sooner. And Louisa would find it very dull here."

"The children, at least, would like nothing better than to take permanent possession of this house, and if I thought being a country girl would make Helen strong and well again, I should be tempted to try it."

"We must have a long visit from her and Royal next summer," said Mrs. Craighead, and she added, "I cannot imagine where Zandy and Dick are."

"I am afraid they are not as obedient and good as they ought to be, mother," said William. "Do they often give you trouble and anxiety?"

"They are as good and obedient as I could ask," his mother replied, quick to defend her darlings. "It is only that they are full of life, and a little thoughtless. I don't mind children's being that, if they are only not bad-tempered and deceitful, and I never had a child or grandchild that was either of those dreadful things. I have seen quite enough of other children to be very well satisfied with my own, and their faults don't worry me as they used to, when you were all little, and I hadn't learned what good men troublesome little boys can make."

"I am not afraid, mother, that Aleck's children, with you

and my father to care for them, will not make good men and women. My only fear is that they are too great a care for you. Johnston speaks of it in every letter to me."

"No indeed, dear," replied Mrs. Craighead; "I feel for them the two-fold love of a mother and grandmother. I should be lost without them—my noisy, mischievous boys and girls," and she smiled as Johnny came down stairs three steps at a time. "Is not Corrie ready?" she asked.

"Oh, she wanted to dress up, because Uncle William was here, and Rachel said she shouldn't, and Corrie said she would, and I told her *to*. There she is, dressed to kill."

Corrie came up to her grandmother rather bashfully, and casting a shy look at her uncle, whispered, "Don't tell uncle, grandmamma, but he said one time that red dresses didn't look nice with red hair, and so I put on this blue one. Do red and blue go nicely together?" she asked anxiously.

"Yes, my love, very," said her grandmother, suppressing a smile as she saw the little girl's pink sash, and the funny bow in which it was tied. "Did Rachel dress you?"

The child's cheeks and eyes flamed: "She's perfectly horrid, grandmamma. I never wish to do a thing partic'ly, but she won't let me. I just wish I need never see her again in all my whole life."

"Gently, dear," said her grandmother, stroking the red curls which were Corrie's especial cross.

"Who is this dreadful person, Corrie?" asked her uncle; "some ogress or witch, isn't it, with one great flaming eye in her forehead, and long bony fingers, that she uses to pinch and hurt you with."

Corrie's eyes opened wide, as she looked at her uncle to see if he were in earnest. "O dear, no," she sighed, "it's only Rachel. If it was a witch or an ogress, I'd have her turn my hair into sweet gold hair like Zandy's, and have her bring me beautiful new satin and velvet and gauze frocks every single day, and I wouldn't ever wear woollen things," and she looked mournfully down at her pretty blue cashmere dress.

"I am afraid Corrie has a foible," said her uncle, laughing, as they went to tea.

"Do either of you know where Alexandra and Dick went?" asked their grandfather of the children as they sat down at the table.

"I know"—

"O Johnny, you said you wouldn't tell," cried Corrie.

"I'm not going to, goosey, but I can say I know, when grand-papa wants to know if anybody knows, can't I?"

"How is it that you made such a promise?" asked their uncle, a little sternly. "Did you all know that grandmamma wouldn't like their plans?"

"Why all is"—said Johnny, "Zandy said there wasn't a bit of danger, but grandma would be sure to think there was, and they meant to tell all about it when they got home safe."

"I don't approve of such things, children," said their uncle; "it is all wrong, and I hope this will be the last of such plans and promises."

"Your mother thinks, if she doesn't say it, William, that children will be children," said Mr. Craighead.

"Yes, I do think it," she replied, and added, by way of changing the subject, "I do wish we could see Helen with such red cheeks as Zandy's and Corrie's."

"I think white ones are a great deal nicer," Corrie declared. "I don't want mine to be red when I'm a young lady. I want to be like the Princess Florine. She was all white like a lily, and had beautiful gold hair like Zandy's, and eyes like stars that were twins."

"Ho, ho, what a girl!" laughed Johnny, "what a girl, to think you can ever look like that."

"Well, Zandy says my hair will stop being red by the time I'm a young lady, so I can wear every-colored dresses, and my eyes are pretty now, you know they are, for Zandy says so. And I'm going to have a dress exactly like the Princess Florine's when she went to the ball."

"What?" demanded Johnny.

"A grand yellow satin dress, all spangled over with diamonds, and a lovely diamond comb in her hair; and that's how I'm going to look when I make my debutt."

"*Debutt!*" cried Johnny, derisively, "what's a debutt?"

"It's a thing beautiful young ladies make when their aunts and grandmas take them out to society."

"There they are, and evidently safe," exclaimed Mrs. Craighead, whose watchful ear had caught the sound of gay voices, and footsteps in the creaking snow.

"Don't go to meet them, mother; let them come in and give an account of themselves," said William.

"Oh, never fear but they will come the first thing; poor dears, how cold they must be."

There was a pause, during which stealthy though not very quiet steps crept up the piazza and through the hall, and then a clear young voice outside the dining-room said: "Here we are, grandmamma."

William made a sign for silence, and presently a pair of bright

eyes peered into the room, and then the two delinquents entered with rosy faces, and proceeded to laugh and coax away the re-proving looks they met.

"Well, Dick," said his uncle, "what a fright you and Alexandra have given us. Wouldn't it be as well in future for you to let your family know when you propose being gone from dinner-time till after dark?"

"Oh, grandmamma!" cried Alexandra, "we're ever so sorry, but we were going to the end of the lake skating, and we thought you and grandpapa might think there was danger, though there wasn't a speck; the ice was as thick as anything; but we meant, as much as could be, to be home before tea-time, and tell you where we had been. You don't mind now, do you, grandmamma dear?"

"Yes, she does mind, Alexandra; she has been very anxious for the last two hours, and you must not do it again."

"Well, we won't ever any more," said Dick.

"Zandy, is it possible that you only wore that little sack this cold day?" asked her grandmother.

"I wasn't a bit cold, grandmamma," Zandy replied.

"Did you really go as far as the island?" asked Johnny.

"Did Mart Reynolds go with you, Dick?"

"Yes; what made you think of him?" answered Dick, exchanging a look with Zandy.

"Susy said he'd gone, but she tells such fibs I didn't believe it."

"We didn't ask him," said Zandy; "but he came along with his skates, and we couldn't tell him we didn't want him."

After tea, when they were all in the library again, Corrie climbed upon her grandfather's knee, Johnny poked the fire to make it blaze higher, and the grown people settled themselves comfortably for a long evening's visit, while Zandy and Dick had plainly something on their minds that forbade their joining the circle. Presently they exchanged a whisper or two that made Johnny prick up his ears, on the alert for mysteries, and then left the room. Johnny cried, "We're coming, too—" and started after them, and Corrie followed, but they were peremptorily dispensed with, and went back to console themselves as they best could, until Rachel came to take them to bed. No more was seen of Zandy and Dick until late in the evening, when they appeared, much to their grandmother's surprise.

"Why, children," she said, "I thought you were in bed an hour ago! What are you thinking of?"

"We've been very busy, grandmamma," said Zandy, "but

we're going this minute. We only want you to say that we may take Miss Flyte and the little sleigh, and go somewhere after breakfast."

"I don't know of any reason why you shouldn't, as there is no school to-morrow, though 'somewhere' is rather an indefinite place; but it is not quite polite to Uncle William, is it? You have hardly seen him."

"We shan't be gone long," said Dick, "and it's something very important, Uncle William."

"I don't doubt it, Dick. The affairs of boys and girls are always important," his uncle replied. "What is it, Alexandra? You look as if you had a state secret on your mind, and felt a desire to confide it to me. Let's have it."

Zandy let her uncle lead her across the hall into the dark drawing-room, where they had a private interview of some length, from which they both returned looking rather sober.

"Is nobody to be intrusted with the secret but you, William?" asked his mother.

"Why, the truth is, Zandy hasn't confided it to me even. I've been all this time trying to induce her to, but she evidently thinks that in the multitude of counsellors there is *not* wisdom. Perhaps she will think better of it by morning."

Dick and Zandy had one more conference before they parted for the night.

"Why didn't you ask Uncle William for it?" asked Dick.

"I did, Dick, and"—

"Why, he said you wouldn't confide in him."

"He meant that I wouldn't tell him what I wanted the money for. Of course I couldn't tell him that, you know, and he said he couldn't let me have so much unless I did. He was afraid, we wanted it for some foolishness, I suppose. O dear, I do wish we had saved what grandpa has given us all along; we should have plenty then."

"Yes, indeed," replied Dick, "but there's no use crying for spilt milk. I wish we could find ten dollars growing on a bush."

"If we could tell grandmamma, she would help us, I know, but we promised"—

"Uncle William won't tell that we wanted money, will he?"

"No, he said he wouldn't say a word about it; but O dear, what can we do?"

"We must go to bed now, that's certain, and maybe uncle will change his mind by morning."

"I'm sure he won't unless we tell, and we can't. I just wish some of Corrie's fairies would come and leave the money on my pillow while I'm asleep."

CHAPTER III.

THE SECRET.

THE next morning, with the very first streak of gray dawn, Zandy stood, dressed even to her jacket and hat, beside her brother's bed.

"Dick," she said softly, "get up this minute; we are going now, instead of after breakfast."

Dick opened his eyes, and shut them again. "What's the use?" he said, sleepily. "It's a great deal better to go after breakfast."

"No it isn't; I've been awake ever so long thinking about it, and I know; the people in the village won't be so likely to see us, and then we can visit with Uncle William longer."

"O dear, what a bother! I'm awfully sleepy. Look here, Zandy," he exclaimed, roused by the sudden thought, "you can't get the money, if you go without seeing Uncle William first."

"I shan't ask for it again—I wouldn't for anything," replied Zandy emphatically. "I know a way to get it, and I'm going to see about it before we come home."

"What in the world—"

"You needn't ask any questions now, for I shan't tell you a thing. You'll see what I'm going to do when it's done. Get straight up, there's a dear, and don't make a speck of noise, and I'll go and get some more things ready, so we can take them out to the stable when you come down."

Zandy stole to the kitchen on tiptoe, and at once lifted the cover of a large basket that stood on the table. "Lots more things will go in," she whispered to herself, and softly opening the pantry door, she possessed herself of a plateful of cookies and crullers, which she easily disposed of, leaving still room for something; and going on another tour of investigation, she came back, more on tiptoe than ever, holding a cold roast chicken by the leg, just as Dick appeared.

"Oh, Dick!" she cried, in a stifled voice, "how you frightened me! I thought it was Betsey. She'll be dreadfully vexed at me for taking this, but it's too nice to leave. She didn't half fill the basket, for all she made such a fuss about it."

"Well, you had better hurry now, for she'll be coming down pretty soon; it's most six."

"Yes; you just take the basket and go on, while I get some warm things from the hall closet that I hid there last night," said Zandy, and she soon followed Dick out to the stable with a load of old cloaks and lap-blankets, that fairly made her stagger.

"Don't put on the bells, Dick."

"Do you take me for a born goose?" asked Dick, indignantly.

"No, but I thought I'd 'mind you,' as Corrie says."

In a very few minutes Dick and Zandy, with the basket and bundle, and a small supply of dry wood, were in the little sleigh, and flying swiftly over the smooth road, their cheeks growing rosier with every breath of the clear, frosty air.

"Stop a minute," said Zandy, as they were passing some of the village shops; "stop, I want to see something."

"What do you want to see?" asked Dick, bringing Miss Flyte suddenly to a walk.

"I want to see if Miss Bean is up," answered Zandy, scrutinizing a little one-story building, with one wide window, in which stood tall bonnet-racks, relieved for the time of their gay burdens, while rows of box-laden shelves and the end of a counter seen within showed that it was a milliner's shop, and "Miss Bean" over the door made it equally evident to whom the shop belonged.

"What do you care whether Miss Bean is up or not," queried Dick, ready to give the reins to Miss Flyte.

"Because if she is, I want to stop and see her. Yes, she is; I see the smoke just coming up the chimney. Drive up to the sidewalk, Dick."

"Zandy, you are *not* going to borrow the"—

"Money of Miss Bean? I should think not," exclaimed Zandy, scornfully—"the idea! but I wish to see her on business. Don't look cross, there's a darling. I'll tell you all about it as soon as ever I can."

"I don't see any use in your being so private when I'm in the secret," said Dick.

"I know it seems kind of mean, but you will see why I couldn't tell you, when you know what it is;" and Zandy jumped from the sleigh, saying she would only be a minute, and ran around to the back door, for Miss Bean lived with her mother in two rooms back of the shop.

When Miss Bean answered Zandy's knock she gave a little scream and shut the door with a bang, but opened it again at once.

"Why, Zandy Craighead," she cried from behind it, "of all things in life! What fetches you here in the small hours of the morning? Come in, child, come in," and she thrust her hand out and drew Zandy through the smallest space possible. "What is the matter of—la! no wonder you laugh," she cried, surveying herself in her short-gown and petticoat, and feeling of her hair, which was in curl-papers in front and one little pug behind. "But never mind, I shall look fine when the time comes. Well—"

"Now, Miss Prissy," said Zandy almost in a whisper, "tell me first: are you going to New York to-morrow?"

"Yes, of course I am, unless the sky falls before that time."

"It won't, and I want you to do something awfully, dreadfully important, for me; but first you must promise solemnly that you will *do it*, and then that you never will tell as long as you live and breathe; promise quick, because Dick is waiting in the cold;" and Zandy seized Miss Bean by the shoulders, as she leaned against the wall to gaze at Zandy and collect her senses, and gave her an impatient little shake.

"Oh, sakes me, child, I do promise, but it's wicked—yes, monstrous of me; it's a sin against your dear grandma, that's always been my best friend."

"No, it isn't; it's my affair, and I'll never tell of you. It isn't wrong, either. Can anybody hear?"

"La, no, there's nobody here but me and ma, and she's as deaf as a post, you know as well as I do. Pity's sake, tell me quick, for I'm a'most dead with fear."

So, eagerly, earnestly, and a little incoherently, Zandy told her errand, amid protestations and horrified ejaculations on the part of Miss Bean, all overpowered by Zandy's final solemn reminder, "You *promised*, you know."

"O dear me! I did, I know. I only wish I hadn't—I do, indeed."

The one minute had only multiplied to seven when Zandy returned, triumphant, to Dick, having run back once to open the door and say, "To-night, remember, at half-past seven, at the garden-gate. You promised, you know."

"There! Dick, I'm so glad!" she exclaimed, as Miss Flyte took to her flying heels once more. "I've a great mind to tell you now, but it won't be half so nice as to wait."

"Well, wait, then," answered Dick, rather crossly; but Zandy's gay spirits soon restored his good-nature.

When they reached the farther end of the lake, and stopped, Zandy said, "I wish we could cross on the ice; it would save time, and the things will be so heavy to carry."

"So we can," replied Dick; "the ice they were cutting for the ice-house yesterday was nearly two feet thick. Head up, Miss Flyte, I'll hold you tight, and we are light; you will quite earn your right to a breakfast nice, if you carry us safely over this ice."

Miss Flyte, inspired by Dick's poetical charge, and encouraged by the laughter she heard behind her, arched her pretty neck and walked carefully down the bank and across the ice, as if a heavy step might break it, and with some slipping and much pains, landed the sleigh safely upon the island.

Having assured her that they would be back soon, Dick took the basket and Zandy the bundle, and they plunged sturdily through the snow, and were soon at the entrance of poor Jacques's tower. They paused an instant at the door to listen and look at each other, and then knocked; and having waited for an answer, as none came, Zandy said, softly, "It's your friends; shall we come in?"

A faint voice replied, "Yes, come in;" and so they entered with their burdens.

Nothing could be more cheerless than Jacques's deserted retreat, and nothing more forlorn than the quiet figure lying upon the dilapidated bed, with no extra covering but two small garments—one, Zandy's warm cloak, was over the shoulders, and the other, Dick's coat, covered the feet. Zandy had a great pain at her heart as she looked down at the pale face and met the hollow eyes that looked up at her, and heard how weak the voice was that said, "You are very good to come again so soon."

"Oh, we meant to, you know," she replied, throwing off with an effort the oppression she felt. "Are you better this morning?"

"I am afraid not, much. I tried to get up a little while ago, but I found myself very weak."

"Oh, well, never mind," said Zandy, feeling that her patient needed cheering. "You will get stronger when you've eaten something."

"Did the fire burn?" asked Dick.

"Yes, the wood got dry after a while, and burned till nearly morning; and the hissing and smoke were company till it began to blaze."

"I wish you could have a fire all day, but you see the smoke would make people think Jacques was here, and they would be coming to look after him."

"But we are going to make some now, to heat the coffee with," said Zandy, "and it will warm you up, and all these

thick things will keep you warm till it is dark; then you can make the fire again."

"You are very good," said the stranger, his voice husky and tremulous with feeling; and his gloomy eyes followed the children's movements, while Dick made a bright, crackling fire with the dry wood they had brought, and Zandy, first spreading a couple of lap-blankets over her patient, put the ready-made coffee into a little pot, and set it on a brick by the fire. "I shan't take everything out of the basket," she said, adroitly disclosing some of its contents, and replacing them, "because they will keep better all together. I'll leave everything in here when we go, and cover it up tight, so it can't freeze."

She then cut some bits from the chicken, just enough to tempt a delicate appetite, and a couple of slices of bread. "These are to be toasted; is the fire ready, Dick?"

"No, it isn't burned down enough yet."

"Well, the coffee is boiling, so the fire must hurry up," said Zandy; and she sat watching Dick for a moment as he tended the fire, tucking little pine sticks here and there, and then she glanced at the pale face, and finally, with a flush on her own, and a shyness of manner that was not a usual thing with her, she drew nearer the rough bed, and said, "You want very much to know about the—what—what we said we would do last night, and I will tell you now. We couldn't do it right away, as I thought we could, and I'm ever so sorry; but I—we can in three or four days, and you'll be very safe here; you know nobody ever comes to Jacques's tower hardly, and we will bring you things. You couldn't go to-night, anyway; you won't be well enough, and we will make you as comfortable as we can; though it's a dismal place, isn't it?" she added, looking ruefully about her.

"It is too good for me, and you are far too kind to me. I ought to wish that you had never found me here, at least until I was dead, but I can't—life is sweet, even to such as I."

The young man—for he was young—covered his face with his hands, and Zandy went to toasting the bread, with the tears falling so fast that she was in danger of burning it; so Dick did the toasting, while Zandy dried her eyes, and then poured out the fragrant coffee.

"Now Dick, come here," she said, "and lift his head, while I roll up all these things for a pillow. No, that won't do; you must sit down there on the bed, and let him lean against you; so—that's better. I am going to feed you. Your hand trembles so, you would spill the coffee. See if it is good."

"Yes, indeed, it is."

"I am glad; now eat a little chicken and toast; that's right. Why, you have quite an appetite, and grandmamma always says that if anybody can eat, they can't help getting strong."

When the cup and plate were empty, Dick and Zandy had the satisfaction of hearing their patient declare he felt better already.

"That's jolly, isn't it, Zandy?" cried Dick.

"Yes, indeed, I am so glad! Why, you can really stand up, can't you? not long, to be sure, but a little is better than nothing. Now, I suppose we must go. I hope you won't be very lonely; we will try to come to-morrow."

"I don't believe you had better. I shall want to see you very much, but I am afraid you will get into trouble, and God knows I wouldn't have you for my sake. No, don't come again till you—don't come again at all. Why should I let you do me such a service? I must have been insane when I consented."

"You needn't ask us not to," cried Zandy, "for we want to, and we will."

"Promise me, at least, that unless you can do it easily, without any trouble or sacrifice, you will give it up. Give it up now, children; it is not worth your pains."

"O dear, dear, don't talk like that," cried Zandy, nearly sobbing. "We will help you; I'd rather die than not."

She set the little pot by the fire, covered up the basket, and said: "Bundle all up in the rest of the things, and I don't believe you will get so very cold. Good-by."

"Good-by, my dear, kind friends," came from trembling lips.

Zandy stopped, after Dick had left the hut, to say, "Grandma would tell you, if you are in trouble or lonely, to think about your best friend—Jesus, you know," and then she hurried after Dick.

"I wonder if Mart will care, because we went without him," said Zandy, when they were on their way back to the village, and had begun to recover their spirits.

"No matter whether he cares or not," replied Dick. "I only wish he didn't know a thing about it. He wouldn't have given as much as a biscuit to keep the poor man alive."

"What I'm afraid of is, that if he is vexed, he will tell it all. It would be just like him."

"If he does, I'll give him such a thrashing as he never had yet," cried Dick, clenching his fist.

"That wouldn't save the poor man, though," said Zandy. "What can it be that makes him need to hide? I do wish we knew."

"I'll tell you what we will do," said Dick, who had been

considering: "We'll stop and see Mart, and get him to go with us to-morrow, and if we can't take Miss Flyte across the ice again, he can help me carry some wood. There must be some more wood got there by that time, or the poor man will freeze."

"Yes, that will do. Don't you suppose he would have been frozen to death by this time, if we hadn't looked into Jacques's tower yesterday?"

"Frozen or starved, or both," answered Dick.

"O dear me! I never shall forget how he looked when we went in—like a frightened ghost, didn't he? What do you suppose is the matter?"

"If he was a boy, I should think he had disobeyed his father, and got thrashed—"

"Dick! fathers never do such things," cried Zandy.

"Yes they do—such fathers as old Reynolds. There's Mart, now," cried Dick, reining in Miss Flyte; and he shouted "Hallo, Mart! come here a minute."

Mart came, and the children told him what they had been doing, and what they wanted him to do the next day. He evidently did not approve of the independent action of that morning, but agreed to help about carrying the wood. "How does the fellow look, after his soft bed and sumptible fare?" he asked with a grin.

"How can you call him a 'fellow?'" demanded Zandy, indignantly. "He is a gentleman."

"I should say so, he's got such lots of money and lives in such style; wants us to be his agents and collect some of his rents, while he loafs in his stone castle." Mart twisted himself around on his heel, and whistled, making Zandy feel a strong inclination to have Miss Flyte run over him; and Dick muttered, "I'll give it to him yet!"

"Don't make him angry," whispered Zandy, knowing that he might do great mischief if he chose.

"Well, Mart," said Dick, smothering his wrath, "we'll be at your house to-morrow afternoon, after school, and you be ready; and remember, mum's the word. We must keep our promise."

"All right," answered Mart, and Zandy and Dick drove on, venting to each other, as they went, their disgust at Mart's talk, and his conduct generally. There was not a boy in town, as Dick declared, that he would not rather have had in the secret than he.

When they got home, Zandy stopped in the kitchen to wait till Dick came in from the stable. "Are they at breakfast?"

she asked of Betsey, who manifested her displeasure at the depletion of her larder, by answering shortly, "Of course they be, if they hain't got through."

"Betsey, you dear old soul," said Zandy, coaxingly, "we'll have a little conversation by-and-by, and make it all up. You can't stay vexed with me, if I did steal your chicken;" and she joined Dick, and they went up stairs by the back way.

"I'm so sorry we're late; what will uncle think of us?"

"Think we're scamps, of course. Looks are against us, I must say; but we may as well put a bold face on the matter, and not act as if we thought so, too; a little brass, you know," he added, with a dashing air, that quite raised Zandy's spirits.

She had no fear but they could make it all right with their grandmother, and if she were satisfied, their grandfather would be too; but she stood in awe of her uncle's disapproval, as she knew her cousin Helen was a model of lady-like behavior, and, independent as she was, Zandy cared very much for the good opinion of those she loved. Dick's love of approbation was greater than Zandy's; so the boasted brass melted, and the bold faces became very meek ones, when they entered the breakfast-room and met so many grave looks.

"Great doings," cried Johnny, the first to speak, "going off before breakfast, taking chickens and loaves of bread, and nobody knows what all."

"Who told you?" demanded Zandy. "O dear me!" she cried, looking from one to the other, "you all think we've been in dreadful mischief, and I just wish we could tell you all about it, and then you would see that we haven't."

"Why not tell, Alexandra, and make it all right?" said her uncle. "Secrets are not good things for anybody, especially for children, and if I were you, I would get rid of mine as soon as I could."

"We can't, we can't," said Zandy, in distress, realizing for the first time what a troublesome thing a secret may be. "Grandma, do *you* think we're bad, too?" she asked.

"I don't think you mean to be, dear; but I cannot approve of secrets, either. Where have you been?"

"We have only been where you said we might go," replied Dick. "We thought we could get home in time for breakfast, and have more chance to see Uncle William."

"Tell us what you did with the chicken," said Johnny.

"'Course they ate it up," said Corrie, wisely.

"No we didn't, you meddling little thing," cried Zandy, losing her temper in her perplexity; "we took it to a poor sick

man, if you must know," and then her heart fairly stood still. She felt for a moment as if she had told the whole story.

"A poor man?" said Johnny. "Oh, old Mr. Fry, I guess."

"Never mind, Johnny," said his grandmother; "no more questions or remarks. Let Zandy and Dick eat their breakfast in peace; we can trust them, I think," and her smile banished the cloud from Zandy's heart and face.

The morning passed quietly enough, and after dinner William Craighead went away on the train.

"Don't have any more secrets, when you get through with this one, Zandy," he whispered, as he bade her good-by.

"I am sure I never want another, uncle," she replied.

CHAPTER IV.

LOVE'S LABOR LOST.

"GRANDMAMMA, what *do* you think?" cried Corrie, coming back from a search for Zandy, who had disappeared soon after tea; "Zandy's locked up in her room, and she won't let me in at all; she keeps saying, 'Go away, go away!' What do you suppose she's doing?"

"Nothing that she cares to have you know about, or she wouldn't have locked the door," replied her grandmother.

"O, dear me! I do wish I knew!" sighed Corrie.

"Corrie is the curiousest girl I ever did see," said Johnny.

"I know somebody that I should say was the curiousest *boy* I ever saw," said his grandfather, from behind his newspaper.

"That isn't being as curious as Corrie, for she's a girl," replied Johnny.

"Pretty good for Johnny!" exclaimed Dick, giving his brother's curly locks a stirring up with his patronizing hand; and a good-natured scuffle ensued, and a chase around and around through the hall and drawing-room, that only came to an end when the boys were out of breath and glad to rest—Johnny on the floor by his grandmother, with his head against her knee, and Dick at full length upon the sofa.

When Rachel came to take Corrie to bed, she was nearly asleep on her grandfather's knee, and went quietly. But presently a series of little shrieks were heard, and then the swift patter of bare feet down the stairs and through the hall, and a little nightgowned figure flew into the library, and stood there with crimson cheeks and dilated eyes, holding up to view two long, thick, shining braids. "Grandmamma! see! Zandy's gold hair!" she gasped.

Before any one had sufficiently recovered from the shock to speak or move, Zandy pushed by Rachel, who stood in the door, and rushing up to Corrie, snatched the braids from her hands. "You horrid bad child," she cried, "how dare you go into my room, prying into my things?"

"Stop, Zandy," said her grandmother; "don't speak so to your little sister."

"Well, she is forever meddling. I hadn't been out of my room two minutes, and she must—"

"Oh, Zandy! how could you? what made you be so bad? it never can be fastened on, never, never!"—and Corrie threw herself upon the floor, sobbing and moaning in an abandonment of grief.

Nobody noticed her, for all were absorbed in contemplation of Zandy, and the beautiful bright braids she held in her hands. What hair was left upon the pretty young head stood out shining like a filmy, golden haze in the firelight; while Zandy looked down speechless, dreading to meet so many disapproving eyes, and feeling that, if she opened her lips to answer questions, she should cry too. The struggle she had been through, locked up in her room, while she combed and braided her hair for the last time, was too lately past for her to feel very brave.

"Well, I must say," exclaimed Dick at length, out of patience with her persistent silence, "if I had done such a ridiculous, outlandish thing as that, I would try and give some reason for it—a poor one, at least."

"How mean you are!" cried Zandy, giving him an indignant look. "You ought to be ashamed to speak so to me."

"Gently, my dears, gently," said Mrs. Craighead; "don't be rude to each other. You have certainly done a very strange thing, Alexandra. I don't understand how you could venture to cut your hair without speaking of it to me, or even hinting that you intended it."

"A very audacious proceeding," remarked Mr. Craighead.

"It was my own hair," said Zandy, with a touch of defiance in her manner, that grew out of the contending feelings she was keeping in check.

"Yes, to be sure, it was your own hair, dear," said her grandmother. "And you are the chief loser. You will have plenty of time to repent your rash act."

Zandy made no reply, and as she stood holding the braids, and wishing herself out of the room, the great clock in the hall struck the half-hour. And with every thought banished, but one, she flew up stairs.

"Well, upon my word," exclaimed Mr. Craighead, "of all the pranks I ever knew a child to perpetrate, that is the most remarkable. What do you suppose possessed her?"

"I cannot imagine," his wife replied. "It is the greatest pity. I feel sorry for her, too. Has she ever complained of her hair to you, Rachel—of its being too much trouble, or making her head ache?"

"No, ma'am," replied Rachel, pausing with Corrie in her

arms, the child having cried till she could cry no more; "leastways except when I'd be brushing and braiding it, and pull it a bit, as who could help it, and it so thick and long."

"Well, good night, little Corrie. We shall have to do without the gold braids till they grow again."

"Will they grow again, grandma?" asked Corrie, eagerly; "will they be long in a month?"

"Not quite so soon as that, dearie, but some time."

"Grandma," said Dick, breaking the silence that followed the departure of Corrie and Johnny, "I know Zandy had some good reason for cutting off her hair, and I don't believe we had better say much about it."

"I don't, either, my dear. She will feel badly enough when she realizes that it is gone, and cannot be fastened on, as Corrie says. But it is a thousand pities."

"Yes, indeed," echoed Dick. He soon went in search of Zandy, and found her, at last, coming in at the side door leading from the garden, with a shawl over her head, and having great trouble to keep from sobbing outright. He put his arm around her neck, saying, "Don't cry, Zandy, and don't be vexed with me for what I said. I didn't mean it, anyway; and as soon as I once thought, of course I couldn't have meant it. There isn't another girl in all creation that would have had the pluck to do such a thing. You're a trump, Zandy, and that's a fact."

Zandy was greatly cheered and comforted by Dick's praises, and they went to her room and talked till their grandmother came to send them to bed. Then she was further comforted by her grandmother's kindness.

"Zandy's going to look nicer than ever," Dick said. "Little short curls all over her head will be as cute as anything, prettier than any other girl's hair, if it was a yard and a half long."

"A little trimming at the barber's hands will improve it," said Mrs. Craighead, smiling at the uneven, jagged ends Zandy's shears had left.

Zandy stayed from school the next day to get accustomed to her "bobbed head," as Johnny called it; and such good use did she make of the time, that when Dick came home at noon and asked how she felt now, she looked up from her book, wondering what he meant. Dick laughed, and straightened out one of the little rings of hair, and she laughed too, saying cheerfully, "Oh, I forgot all about it!"

"Zandy, what about this afternoon?" asked Dick. "Will you drive Miss Flyte out beyond the village, a little before it's time for school to be out, and wait for us there? or shall Mart

and I come, and all start from here? I suppose grandmamma would wonder what we were up to, going off with Mart."

"I suppose she would, but I think that is the best way," said Zandy, dreading to have any more privacy than was necessary, and with a special dislike for it where Mart was concerned.

"Well, then, I'll go now and fill the sleigh-box with wood, and you can have Betsey make the coffee by-and-by, and be all ready to go as soon as I can harness Flyte, after school."

"How does Mart behave?"

"Oh, he's a sneak, make the best of him; but I keep watch of him, so he couldn't get a chance to tell any of the boys, if he wanted to. He puts on knowing airs, and tips the wink, and all sort of things, to make out that he's thick with me; and I hate it awfully. When we get out of this scrape, I'd like nothing better than to give him a thrashing; and I think I'll do it, to teach him not to come near me when he can help it;" and Dick went to attend to the wood.

Mrs. Craighead was by no means at ease with regard to the doings of Zandy and Dick for the past day or two, but she chose to wait for their voluntary confidence—which was never long withheld—and not to show a want of trust by calling them to account, when there was really nothing to excite serious anxiety. So she asked no questions when she saw Mart Reynolds, a boy whom she knew the children all disliked, come home with Dick from school, and quietly assented when Zandy said she wanted to go "somewhere" with the boys.

"So you've been cutting off those yellow tails of yours, that folks make such a fuss over," said Mart to Zandy, when they were on their way, and had talked a little about the business in hand.

Zandy had worn a hood instead of her turban, thinking it would prevent the loss of the braids being noticed; and she turned sharply upon Mart, in her surprise: "How did you find it out?"

"Fiddlestick's end! what's to prevent my knowing it, when you had your crop evened up at the barber's this morning? You must look like a picked goose. What did you cut it off for?"

"Because I wanted to, which is reason enough, even if you had any business to ask," replied Zandy, angrily.

"Hoity, toity! tempest in a teapot," sneered Mart. "We're putting on airs, we are."

"Look here, you have got to stop that kind of talk, or you'll be put out of this sleigh, quick," cried Dick, drawing in the reins.

"All the same to me," retorted Mart. "I'm quite agreeable

to being put out. I don't see as there's much to be made out of this business, anyhow," and he made a motion to leave the sleigh.

Zandy and Dick were fairly frightened then, for there was something in Mart's looks that threatened mischief, if he went off in a huff.

"We're in for it, though," said Dick, in a mollifying tone, touching Miss Flyte with the whip, "and we may as well make the best of a bad job."

"It *isn't* a bad job, Dick," cried Zandy, warmly, "and I am glad we are in for it."

"So am I," replied Dick, "but we needn't get into rows over it."

"No," assented Zandy, and Mart was only too glad to consider himself apologized to, and requested to remain.

"Say, what about the money?" he asked, when, having fastened Miss Flyte, he and Dick were carrying the wood through the snow, Zandy taking the lead with her little basket and another package. "Have you got it? 'cause I haven't. The last ten dollars I had I gave to old Sally Clark, to buy a cow with."

Mart said this with a facetious wink, which was lost on his companions, though they knew very well that ten cents was a great deal for him to possess at a time, and that he never was known to give away a penny's-worth.

"We haven't got it yet," said Zandy, "but we are going to have it."

"Who's going to give it to you?—your grandfather?"

"No," replied Zandy, shortly.

"Who then?—come, tell a fellow. I'm in the play, you know, and won't tell of you."

"There's nothing to tell," cried Dick, giving Mart an angry glance.

"Oh no, of course not," sneered Mart. "Easiest thing in the world to get ten dollars when you want it. They grow on bushes, they do."

"What do you mean?" demanded Dick, stopping short, and giving Mart a view of his clenched fist, that made him hasten to assume a different tone.

"Mean! why nothing, only that I wish my dad was as good about forking out his tin as your grandfather. It's hard work to screw a fifty-center out of him, once in a dog's-age. Maybe your Uncle William gave it to you?" he added, after a pause, too curious as to their means of obtaining such a sum to refrain from pressing his inquiries.

"No he didn't," replied Dick.

"If you must know," cried Zandy, with the fear of Mart's

petty malice in mind, "I had something that I didn't—didn't need, and I"—

"Raised the money on that?" suggested Mart.

"Yes, I suppose that is what I did," answered Zandy.

"When will you get it?" asked Mart.

"In two or three days."

Mart gave Zandy a sly look out of his keen little eyes, and said no more till they reached the tower.

"What's the use of knocking?" he asked, as he and Dick came up a few steps behind Zandy—"push in."

Zandy deigned no reply, but put her face to the crack, and said, "Here we are; shall we come in?" and a moment after the door was opened by the new occupant of the tower.

"Oh! why, you are almost well, aren't you?" said Zandy. "I'm so glad. We have brought you some more coffee and wood."

"You are very good. I am a great deal better, thanks to your care."

"Have you been warm? Did the wood last pretty well?" asked Dick.

"Oh, yes, I had a nice fire all night, and the blankets have kept me warm to-day; and my cupboard isn't nearly empty yet, you see," he added, with a smile, as Zandy lifted the cover of the basket, to examine into its present resources.

"I brought you some coffee, though," she said, "and a tray, so that you could eat more comfortably. We can't stay to-day, because I told grandmamma we wouldn't be gone long, and I am afraid we can't come again till Friday. It's a good ways here, and then"—she hesitated, and the young man said, "It is much better that you should not come. I wouldn't have you, pleasant as it is to see you here; you have done too much already."

Dick and Zandy stood near him, and he laid his hands on a shoulder of each, and looked earnestly into their faces. Mart stood apart, his hands in his pockets, with an expression of shrewd, sharp scrutiny in his eyes, quite conscious that he was not included, by so much as a glance, in the stranger's acknowledgments, or in his request: "Will you tell me your names, that I may bear them, as well as your faces, in my memory?"

"O yes, indeed! I am Zandy Craighead, and he is Dick; Alexandra and Richard." The stranger's hands had been quickly withdrawn, and he had started back, when he heard the name of Craighead, and Dick wondered a little, but Zandy hardly noticed the movement, and added, as she turned her head and caught a glimpse of Mart, "O, and Martin Luther Reynolds."

"Say, young man, did you ever live in Oxley?" demanded Mart, planting himself before the stranger.

Dick was arranging the wood for the fire for that night, and Zandy, hearing the coarse insolence of Mart's tone, seized his arm, as she saw that the stranger had turned away and sat down upon the bed, and whispered, "Hush! for shame!"

A sudden wicked impulse made Mart turn upon Zandy, and snatch off her hood. "Look at her!" he cried, "ain't she a beauty?"

"Oh, you horrid boy! how can you be so rude? Give me my hood," Zandy exclaimed.

The young man started to his feet, and Dick cried, "How dare you treat my sister so?" and the blow he aimed at Mart would have laid him flat on the stone floor, if he had not skilfully eluded it and dashed out of the door. Shutting it after him, and holding it against Dick, he called through the crack: "What's the price of yellow hair?—ten dollars for two big braids, hey?—buy a ticket to New York with 'em, hey?" Then there followed a bang, and a sound of flying feet, and when Dick had succeeded, with the stranger's help, in pushing away the snow that Mart had kicked against the door, Mart was half-way across the ice, and still running as fast as he could for slipping.

"He'll catch it for *that*," muttered Dick, burning for vengeance, and he went back to Zandy, who was tying on her hood, while the stranger stood by, his face working with emotion as he watched her. "You are not to come again," he said, when they were ready to go; "at least," he added, seeing Zandy's look of denial, "at least, not until Friday. Come then, if you will, but not before. And you must remember this: that the thought of you will help me the rest of my life. I never, never shall forget you—and your sacrifice for me, Alexandra. Oh, if you had not done *that*!—but it will come back to you in blessings—that is my one comfort. Good-by."

Zandy and Dick went home sober and quiet; Zandy filled with sorrowful wonder about her strange friend, and Dick too angry and busy with plans for Mart's punishment to talk.

The next day, at school, the two boys saw little of each other, Mart being careful to keep out of Dick's way; for the first glance of Dick's eyes told Mart what was in his heart, and though he was older and larger than Dick, he had a reasonable dread of Dick's fists. But after recess, Dick found a note in his desk, containing this:—

Dear Dick:—I am sorry I pulled off your sister's hood. Don't mind it, will you? I saw some boys hanging round the island last night, and I should not wonder if they were up to something about that young gentleman in Jacques's tower. If anything comes of it don't go and lay it to me.

Your true friend,

MARTIN REYNOLDS.

Dick knew very well that nothing but fear could have wrung an apology out of Mart; and the warning in regard to the island set him to watching the author of it more carefully. But it was too late.

That night Mr. Craighead said to his wife: "My dear, Henry Hollister was arrested here in Oxley, last night."

"Is it possible? Poor boy! How was it? where was he?"

"It seems that he had been concealed in Jacques's tower for some days, and his being there was discovered last night. Some one had seen him, I believe, and he was arrested and put in the station-house till this morning, then sent on to New York."

"How sad it is. But, my dear, William could save him; can't you telegraph to him at once, so that he will lose no time?"

"Of course William will know of it as soon as Hollister reaches New York, as he was in William's employ, and forged in his name; he will be the first to be notified. But I am not sure that it would not be the greatest kindness to let the young man suffer the full penalty of his crime."

"Oh no, dear, he is so young, he should have another chance; and think of his poor mother—why Zandy! what is the matter, my child? and Dick, too!"

Mrs. Craighead went over to the sofa, where Zandy lay, sobbing as if her heart would break, and Dick sat by, with his face buried in his arms. It was some minutes before they could give a coherent account of their part in the sad tragedy.

"Well, who would have dreamed that your poor little hearts could carry such a load as that," said Mrs. Craighead, when it had been told. "I should have felt obliged to ferret it out, if I had but faintly imagined that your secret was such a responsible one."

"But you would have kept it, and not have got poor Mr. Hollister arrested," said Zandy. "That horrible, odious Mart Reynolds! he is too mean to live."

"I think I could have been trusted," replied Mrs. Craighead; "but I must think it was very selfish and inconsiderate of Henry to burden two such children with this dreadful secret."

"Why, grandmamma, he couldn't help it," cried Zandy eagerly. "Only think how we found him there—so ill he could hardly speak or move, with having walked so much and being nearly starved, and—"

"Did he tell you all that?" asked Mr. Craighead.

"Why, we asked him all about it," said Dick; "of course we wanted to know what he came for, and how he got there, and all about it; but he never told us that he had forged, only that he came to borrow money of Jacques for a long journey, and that, for some reasons, nobody must know that he was there; and we promised not to tell."

"What did he propose to do, finding that Jacques was gone?" asked Mr. Craighead.

"Why, you see, he wanted to get back to New York and he hadn't a bit of money. That was what he wanted the ten dollars for."

"How could he imagine for a moment that you could get it for him?"

"We offered to get it for him," cried Zandy, "and he said we couldn't and mustn't, and we said we could and would."

"How did you expect to get it, poor children?" asked Mr. Craighead.

"We didn't expect much about it," replied Zandy, "till we got home, and then we were almost crazy to know what we should do."

"And now to think if you had only told Uncle William, he could have prevented Mr. Hollister's being arrested and saved Zandy's hair," said Mrs. Craighead; at which suggestion Zandy's sobs broke out afresh; but then came a relieving thought of the promises.

"What put it in your head to sell your hair, Zandy?" asked her grandfather.

"Why, I had read about one girl that sold her hair to buy things for her sick mother, and about another that sold hers for somebody else; and then, one day, I heard Miss Bean tell Mrs. Jones that she could get her a nice switch in New-York for twenty dollars, and I thought she might sell my hair for fifteen."

"You are not likely to get that for it, dear," said her grandmother, looking sadly at Zandy's bereft head.

"I don't care if I never get a cent for it now," said Zandy.

"You can send the money to the General Relief Society," said Dick, slyly.

"Indeed I will not," replied Zandy, "I'd rather buy a shawl with it for Sally Clark, and see her in it all winter."

"I wish *I* had some long, pretty hair to cut off," sighed Corrie.

"What would you do with it, when it was cut?" asked Dick.

"I would keep it on; that's what I want it for," replied Corrie.

Miss Bean, being detained longer than she expected in New-York, sent the money by post, and Zandy received it on Saturday.

"It would have kept poor Mr. Hollister waiting a long time, wouldn't it?" she said, examining the bill she held.

"And it wouldn't have been enough, either," returned Dick. "What a horrid swindle—only five dollars for such a lot of pretty hair."

"It will buy Sally a shawl, any way. O dear! poor Mr. Hollister."

Miss Bean heard the story of the arrest, and of the use Zandy had for the money, as soon as she returned to Oxley, and lost no time in calling on Mrs. Craighead, to obtain forgiveness for her part in the transaction; and many were the tears she shed over that poor dear young man, and Zandy's pretty hair. "To think that *I* should have been the one to carry it off," she cried, shaking her curls, and groaning in spirit.

Dick's punishment of Mart was not long delayed, and was bestowed with a mixture of contempt and energy that made it one long to be remembered.

Early in the following week came a letter from William Craighead, giving later tidings of young Hollister. As soon as the news of his arrest and arrival in New-York reached William, he went to see him, and heard his story. It was, in effect, that instant flight had seemed the only thing left for him, and he had acted upon his first impulse: to go to his old friend Jacques, and borrow money for a long journey—a journey to some foreign country, where he might earn, and repay, the sum he had taken from his employer. He had little in his purse when he started, and the last part of his journey to Oxley had been made under difficulties, that, added to the strain of misery, and dread of discovery, had proved too much for his strength; and finding the tower deserted, he must have died, if it had not been for the chance visit of the children, and their great kindness, which he felt very deeply. Of Zandy's sacrifice he could not speak with any degree of calmness. "You remember," William wrote, "my telling you of the interview I had with Henry, directly after hearing of the forgery,

in which I offered to let him keep his place and refund the money as he could, as I had confidence in his real honesty, and was anxious, for his mother's sake as well as his own, to give him another chance. And I renewed that offer, notwithstanding his folly in running away, and so making the affair public. But he would listen to no plan but going far away, where he need never see a familiar face until he could cancel his debt. So to-day he has sailed for China, having utterly refused to add to his debt to me more than barely enough to pay his passage, and has left his mother and sister and brother desolate, as you may suppose. Foolish boy! I feel indignant with him for being so obstinately blind to his own good."

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CHAPTER V.

THE CRAIGHEADS' CHRISTMAS.

THE last two Christmases had been sad days with the Craigheads, as unlike holidays as possible. But this year Mr. and Mrs. Craighead had determined, for the children's sake, to set aside their own feelings, which would have led them to treat Christmas, and all holidays, like sad anniversaries.

"I would not for the world," Mrs. Craighead said to her husband, "have the children grow up and leave us without happy memories to carry with them, and the more they have the better. I believe every sweet, bright memory of home is a safeguard and help in life's perilous ways, and I know dear Aleck and Cornelia felt so too. And then there is poor little Grace. I would not have her come from her dismal convent school, expecting to have a merry time, and find dull, sober faces, and nothing going on. We old people must not be selfish in our sorrows, and forget that grief is short-lived with the young—that life is bright and worth having, even after such losses as our children have met; and it should be so, for how could they bear the accumulating griefs of a life-time, if each was as lasting as when we get on in years, and look back, rather than forward."

"Poor little Grace" was the niece of Mrs. William Craighead, her only sister's child; and it was no wonder that Mrs. Craighead, with her ideas of what a child's life should be, spoke of her pityingly. Her mother died when she was but eight years old, and her father, a grave, proud man, kept her with him, not because he loved her so much as to find it hard to part from her, but because he would not burden any one with the care of his child, and considered her too young to be at school. As they travelled most of the time, being seldom for more than a few weeks in one place, and Grace had no companions but her taciturn father and her French nurse, she knew nothing of home life and influences, and had no training such as a child has special need of. So long as her manners were gentle and ladylike, and her dress faultless, her father was satisfied, and felt that he was doing more than his duty in taking her wherever he went, and having an unexceptionable *bonne* to care for her.

When Grace was fourteen years old, her father brought her to America, and placed her in a convent, sorely against the wishes and judgment of her Aunt Louisa, who would have been rejoiced to take her sister's child into her home, and bestow upon her such care and love as she gave her own children. But no one was ever known to oppose Mr. Gellert's will with any success, and the most Mrs. William could effect was that Grace should come to them in vacations. She was to spend this Christmas in Oxley, because her aunt had gone South with Helen for the winter, and had proposed it as a substitute for the happy week Grace was anticipating with her cousins in New York.

Alexandra and Dick were full of curiosity to see what Grace was like. They knew that she was very pretty, and that she had seen a great deal of the world, both which items gave her importance in their eyes. Dick suggested that she might think Oxley a pokey little place, and think them queer and countrified, suggestions that Zandy vehemently repelled. But there is little doubt that her coming was an added incentive to have the Christmas doings as fine as possible, or that Zandy tried to see everything through Grace's eyes, when she and Dick took a final survey, a little while before her arrival.

"If she doesn't think it is lovely—she needn't, that's all," said Zandy.

"I don't believe she can help it," replied Dick; and, indeed, how could she, when the house looked like a sylvan grotto, in its tasteful evergreen trimmings? "I wish we could take just one peep at the tree," he added in a whisper. "I wonder if it is as nice as the ones we used to have."

"I'll tell you something," said Zandy, also in a whisper, for a Christmas-tree had not been so much as breathed by the older people, and only by the children, to each other, in secret; "I didn't mean to, but I will. You know the great Norway spruce that grandma said shaded the kitchen porch too much?"

"Yes."

"Well, it has been cut down within two days! I missed it, and when I asked about it, grandmamma looked funny, so I knew in a minute."

"Why, the dickens! it must fill the music-room from floor to ceiling, and touch the four walls besides. It can't help being a beauty, if it's trimmed up gay and is full of lights. There's Mr. Boyd; I hear his voice. Let's go and see what he thinks of the fixings."

Sydney Boyd had been an intimate college friend of William Craighead's, always warmly welcomed by the family when he

came to visit his friend; and since he had come to Oxley, as pastor of the church the Craigheads attended, their house had been a home to him, and he had regarded them as his chief friends and advisers. Mrs. Craighead felt an especial and tender interest in him, growing out of a knowledge which she kept hid in her own heart, even from her husband. His love for the lost Edith had never been told, even to herself, except by looks and tones, yet Sydney knew that her mother had guessed it, and it was an unacknowledged bond of sacred and sad sympathy between them.

"What magicians you are, Zandy!" Mr. Boyd said. "I feel as if I must be under the sea, in a mermaid's grotto, everything is so enchantingly green."

Mrs. Craighead came into the hall at the moment, saying: "I hear the sleigh-bells, my dears; they are coming; be sure to give Grace a warm welcome."

She opened the door presently, letting a broad stream of ruddy light out across the piazza, and upon the sleigh that had just driven up.

"You are not to think of us as strangers, for a moment," said Mrs. Craighead, when the young visitor, having received a warm greeting from all, looked shyly into the faces about her. "We are friends, as much as if we had known you all your life. Now we will go up stairs, if you are warm. Come with us, Zandy."

"A very nice little girl, or I am very much mistaken," said Mr. Craighead, when they were gone.

"She certainly has a very sweet face, and a sweet voice," said Mr. Boyd.

"Her hair is almost white, but it isn't as pretty as Zandy's color," said Corrie.

"Who is Rosalie?—her servant?" asked Johnny.

"I should call such a grand person as that a lady's maid," said Dick.

"I wouldn't have one all to myself for anything," declared Corrie. "A part of Rachel is dreadful, and the whole wouldn't let me do a bit as I want to. Godmothers and broomsticks are the best of all."

When Mrs. Craighead came down, she stopped a moment with the group by the hall fire. "Well, my dears," she said, "we are sure of loving Grace. She seems as simple and child-like as my own girls and boys. She and Zandy are getting on famously."

By and by Zandy and Grace appeared, chatting as fast as if they had known each other all their lives. But the first

sight of Grace nearly took Corrie's breath away, and she gazed at her with wide-open eyes, and lips apart—such a lovely blue silk dress and blue boots, and such corals, and such a cloud of fair curls, fastened back with a coral comb. It was the shining array that entranced Corrie; but the pretty face was what attracted the older people, the exquisite complexion and childlike outlines, and the lovely eyes.

"Come to tea this minute," cried Mrs. Craighead. "The party will come before we are ready, I am afraid. Why, Grace is not as tall as Zandy, is she? When was your birthday, Grace?"

"I was fifteen in September," answered Grace.

"And Zandy will be fifteen next month."

"Is Dick older than Zandy?" asked Grace.

"They are twins; didn't you know it?"

"How nice it must be to have brothers and sisters," said Grace, wistfully.

"You must make brothers and sisters of my children, dear; you could not have better ones," said Mrs. Craighead, her heart full of sympathy for the lonely girl.

"But I can only have them for a few days," Grace replied.

"Then I shall have to go back to that dreadful convent."

"Is it such a dreadful place?" asked Zandy, whose ideas were of cells, and secret passages, and black-robed nuns.

"Why, no, it isn't, really; the sisters are kind, and the girls are pleasant, but I do get very dull sometimes," and Grace sighed.

"Well, dear, don't think about it now," said Mrs. Craighead, turning the conversation to the festivities of the evening.

"How about the invitation that you and I discussed the other day?" asked Mr. Boyd of Zandy. "Was it given, or not?"

"Yes; and what do you think?" cried Zandy. "I invited Carrie, and nobody else; and Corrie says that Susie and Mart are both coming! I never heard of such impertinence."

"Perhaps they misunderstood, and thought they were invited too," suggested Mrs. Craighead.

"No they didn't—they couldn't, for I took the greatest pains to have Carrie know that I didn't wish them to come. Susie will look like a peacock, and Mart will act like a wild Indian. I wouldn't have invited Carrie, if I had thought she would bring the whole family."

"I don't think Carrie had anything to do with it," said Mr. Boyd. "I suppose Mrs. Reynolds didn't like to have Mart, who is her special pet, and Susie, the beauty of the family, slighted. But you would be glad to let them come for the sake

of having Carrie, if you knew how little she has to make her happy."

"Are they poor?" asked Grace.

"No indeed," replied Dick. "Mr. Reynolds is rich, and they live in one of the handsomest houses in Oxley."

"Yes, and the house is handsomely furnished," added Mr. Boyd; "plenty of fine carpets, mirrors and so on; but no books, no pictures, nothing to make it homelike and attractive; a melancholy place, altogether."

"Mrs. Reynolds looks like a weak woman," said Mr. Craighead.

"She is not very efficient," replied Mr. Boyd, with a look that said more than his words. "Carrie is the flower of the family, and being good-natured and kind, she gets imposed upon. She has a care-worn, sad look already, that I hate to see, on a young face especially. I consider it a personal favor when anybody gives Carrie a little diversion, her opportunities are so few."

"There's the bell; somebody has come!" cried Johnny; and they went to the drawing-room to find the Reynoldses themselves, the first arrivals. Mart had already assumed a swagger to conceal his want of ease, and Susie was holding herself very stiff, so as not to disturb the triple row of shiny curls that had cost her nearly two sleepless nights. Then there was Carrie, whom Mr. Boyd treated with kindly attention, and who was well-nigh as spell-bound at sight of Grace as Corrie had been. Carrie was poorly dressed; evidently all the pains had been bestowed upon Susie; but her eyes were clear and bright, and though her mouth was large, and her nose by no means handsome, her face was not unattractive.

The young guests were soon all arrived, and with them a small sprinkling of privileged older ones; and a merry, noisy hour passed, devoted to games and jollity. Then Mrs. Craighead, by way of introducing a more quiet order of things, proposed music, and played herself some old-fashioned reels and minuets, to which all listened, and which all enjoyed, except Mart Reynolds, who improved the opportunity to take a peep in at the dining-room window; and when the doors were opened it needed no conscious volition, on his part, to take him to the central point of observation and access; and he kept it till he had had a surfeit of the various dainties with which the table was provided.

Mrs. Craighead and Mr. Boyd disappeared before the supper was ended, and when the company returned to the drawing-room a dazzling view of the Christmas-tree met their eyes. It was like a fairy spectacle, so richly hung and brilliantly lighted, and it is a question how long it took Corrie to recover from the daze into which the first sight of its glories threw her.

A very jolly Santa Claus bestowed upon each guest some pretty gift from the tree. The family presents, including all the mysteries that had been secretly delivered to Mrs. Craighead's care, at various times during the past fortnight, were left to be distributed after the party had broken up.

"I've had such a happy evening," Carrie Reynolds said, as she bade Mrs. Craighead good-night. "I am so much obliged to you for letting me come."

"I really wish you would come often, my dear," replied Mrs. Craighead, kindly. "Alexandra is rather young for a mate for you, but if you do not think me too old, come and visit me."

Carrie looked her thanks, and Mr. Boyd said:

"I have a plan to lay before you, Mrs. Craighead, which I hope you will accede to. It was my duty to submit it to you first, but I ventured upon your goodness, and talked it over with the children. I propose to come, the day after to-morrow, and take Zandy and Miss Gellert and Dick and Carrie to see one of my particular friends. It involves a long sleigh-ride, which they don't seem to regard as an objection. We should go in the morning and return in the afternoon."

"But have you notified your friend?" asked Mrs. Craighead. "You would not think of taking her by surprise with so many strangers, though they are children."

"My friend is a man, not a lady," said Mr. Boyd, "and I have a standing invitation to go myself, and I am not afraid to take these young people with me."

"But to dinner!" exclaimed Mrs. Craighead. "It is all the worse if it is a man."

"I question that," replied Mr. Boyd. "I am strongly of the opinion that a man, taken by surprise, with little in his pantry, no pies or cakes, would take things much more coolly than a woman."

Mrs. Craighead finally consented, and the arrangements were made.

CHAPTER VI.

THE RECLUSE OF PINE VALLEY.

"WE needn't take the trouble to wish you a pleasant time," said Mr. Craighead, as he and Mrs. Craighead stood upon the piazza, watching the bright faces in the sleigh and Mr. Boyd's careful attention to the last wrappings-up, and tuckings-in, and listening to the merry chatter and laughter. "I should wish I were going, too, to see your queer friend, if it were not for being deafened by so much noise—such a nest of magpies as you have there!"

"Magpies, indeed!" cried Mr. Boyd; "doves, you mean. My nestlings, we are ready at last;" and he sprang up beside Dick, and drove away amid the jingling of bells, and shouted good-bys, and the throwing of kisses.

"Were there ever four happier, sweeter faces?" said Mrs. Craighead, as she and her husband went into the house.

"What gentle ways Grace has!" said Mr. Craighead; "I think she will have a good influence upon the children."

"I don't think she is any lovelier than they are," replied Mrs. Craighead. "She is more quiet in her manners, and very winning; but she is not really any more gentle."

"Alexandra was disobliging yesterday about playing duets with Dick, for Grace; and I should have been glad to hear her offer to stay at home, when they thought five would crowd the sleigh, instead of leaving Grace to do it."

"My dear, don't intimate that Zandy is not generous. Think of her hair, and how often she yields to the children!"

"Well, my dear, you need not take up the cudgels for Zandy so earnestly," said Mr. Craighead, smiling at his wife's disturbed tone; "I know she is a good child—better than the average."

"The average! I should think so, dear."

Meantime the noisy five were fast leaving Oxley and the lake behind them.

"Are we going as far as Granby, Mr. Boyd?" asked Carrie, as, a mile beyond the lake, they turned south.

"Farther than Granby," Mr. Boyd replied. "Look away beyond Granby, and beyond the river; do you see that sharp-topped hill, which seems to stand close against the other higher

ones—looks as if it were one of them? Well, it is a separate hill, and behind it lies a narrow valley—Pine Valley, my friend has named it—and that is where he lives."

"How perfectly splendid to go so far!" cried Carrie; "why, I should think it would take us all day to get there."

"Hardly more than an hour from here," Mr. Boyd replied.

"I never have been so far from Oxley since we lived there," said Carrie.

"How long is that?" asked Grace.

"Two years," Carrie replied.

"How dreadful!" exclaimed Grace.

"I would rather live in Oxley, and never see anything, than to live anywhere else, and see everything," declared Zandy.

"Let me tell you something about my friend, Mr. Chandler," said Mr. Boyd; "I want you to hear it before you see him, so that you will know how he came to live as he does; and that he deserves sympathy and respect, though appearances are rather against him. I saw him at my grandfather's house a long time ago—I couldn't have been more than fifteen; but he made such an impression upon my boyish fancy, that when I met him a year ago, in Granby, I recognized him at once, in spite of his having changed very much in appearance. Well, this is the story: he was a born inventor, and even when a boy his gift was apparent. He was always originating, or improving upon something; toys, tools, household utensils, farming implements—there was nothing that his busy, ingenious brain did not look into and experiment upon. But he had no shrewdness or worldly wisdom, and merely helped others, more shrewd and less ingenious, to the suggestions they were in need of. At length he hit upon something in the way of machinery—I forget what, and it doesn't matter—that was really very important; something that had interested many ingenious mechanics. I should tell you here, that he was engaged to be married—was to be married in the autumn. In the spring, and that was the time when I saw him at my grandfather's, full of hope and enthusiasm, the model of the invention was completed, and a friend offered to take it to Washington and obtain the patent, business that Mr. Chandler was but too happy to be relieved from; and he went off to the Lakes for a summer trip, as he needed rest and relaxation. He was travelling all the time, so that it did not surprise him that letters from his lady-love and his friend, were few and irregular; but can you imagine what he felt, on getting home, to find that his friend had obtained the patent in his *own name*, and that his friend and his lady-love had been married a week?"

"To each other?" cried Zandy.

"Do you really mean that the young lady Mr. Chandler was engaged to married his friend?" asked Carrie.

"Yes, Carrie, and the friend married the young lady," replied Mr. Boyd.

"How awful!" "How cruel!" "How could he bear it?" cried the girls.

"You don't mean, though, that the friend told them at Washington that he invented the machine himself?" exclaimed Dick.

"Yes, I mean it."

"And fixed it so that Mr. Chandler couldn't get any good of his own invention?"

"That is just what he did, my boy."

"How *dared* he? Couldn't Mr. Chandler have him arrested, and make him own up? What did he do? I would have killed him," cried Dick, all in a breath.

"I have no doubt he might have done something, but his friend knew his victim before he ventured," replied Mr. Boyd.

"He trusted shrewdly to Mr. Chandler's unworldly ways, and his easy, genial temper."

"Well, didn't Mr. Chandler do a thing, but just let it all go?" demanded Dick.

"He had a terrible brain fever, from which it was a wonder that he recovered. Then he took what was left of his fortune, and turned his back on the world, as he says, and came to Pine Valley."

"Has he ever seen his dastardly friend and lady-love since?" asked Dick.

"No, never; he does not even know where they live. He has hardly a relative in the world; and keeps up no communication with any one, except, I believe, one aunt, who was always very fond of him, and is as much alone in the world as he is."

"Doesn't he hate everybody and everything?" asked Dick. "I should think he would."

"He doesn't hate Mr. Boyd, that's certain," said Zandy.

"He doesn't hate anybody," replied Mr. Boyd. "He lives alone, to be sure, with his black servant, Aminadab, and has no more to do with people than he can help; but he is far from being a bitter misanthrope, and thinking there is no virtue in human nature. His eyes are as kindly as ever; but he says he hadn't wit enough to take care of himself, and keep any knave from taking his coat off his back that wanted it, and that Pine Valley is the only safe place for him."

"Do the people in Granby go to see him?" asked Carrie.

"Not now. He told me that there was a time when the young folks were disposed to go see the 'hermit,' as they called him; but he put a stop to it by telling them, roughly, that he wouldn't have them coming there to look at him, as if he were a wild beast; and now they would as soon think of venturing into a wild beast's den as into Pine Valley, especially since he has a ferocious dog to keep guard for him."

"I am afraid he won't like our coming," said Grace.

"Oh, yes he will," replied Mr. Boyd. "I have paid him several visits since I first met him in Granby, one of three days. We are the best of friends, and I have had it in mind to take Dick and Alexandra to see him for some time; indeed, he jogged my memory in regard to it the last time I saw him, and you and Carrie will be quite as welcome as the rest of us."

"Granby isn't as pretty as Oxley, is it?" said Carrie, as they drove through the one long street, with its plain dwellings, two or three shops, and little white church, and the ungainly factories, that seemed to be the centre of everything.

"It isn't pretty at all," said Grace.

"It is useful enough to have a right to be homely," said Mr. Boyd. "There are five different kinds of factories here."

"Grandpa owns them all, doesn't he?" asked Zandy.

"Not all," Mr. Boyd replied.

"It's great fun to see them make spokes and hubs," said Dick.

"I never have seen anything made," said Carrie. "I wish I could."

"You shall, Carrie," returned Mr. Boyd. "I will bring you all over, some time, and take you through the factories."

It seemed but a little while, so much was there to see and talk of, after they had left Granby and crossed the broad, swift Dilke, before they were at the foot of Sharp-top, as Mr. Boyd called the hill that shut Pine Valley from the world; and then, though the road was hardly worthy the name, rough as it was, and winding in and out among the pines, they soon stopped at the door of the "queerest-looking house," as Grace pronounced it.

While the others were making sundry observations, Mr. Boyd knocked at the door, and had just turned away, fearing that Mr. Chandler was from home, and they might not see him, after all, when he was greeted by a hearty "Hallo, my friend, how are you?" and Mr. Chandler came towards him from the barn.

A figure of medium height, strongly built, dressed in coarse gray trousers and jacket, gray stockings and low shoes, and a gray cap with no rim and flying ear-lappets; a face with many

lines about the mouth and deep-set eyes, and long gray beard and hair—such was Mr. Chandler as to general appearance.

When he grasped Mr. Boyd's hand, and said he was glad to see him, and looked from him to the occupants of the sleigh, a humorous smile lighted up his face, while the blue eyes, shining out from beneath his shaggy eyebrows, might have been those of a careless, light-hearted boy, so sunny and bright were they.

"I am glad to see you all," he said, in his hearty tones, "but I'd like to know who you are. Let me see if I can guess. It doesn't need much shrewdness to know that this is Dick—Dick Craighead. How are you, my boy? glad you have come at last. Where is the golden-haired girl? here; glad to see you, too, Miss Zandy. Now, I'm in the dark. Who are you?" he demanded of Carrie, the bluntness of his words offset by his smile.

"Carrie Reynolds."

"And you?"

"Grace Gellert."

"Very good; now we are acquainted, for I suppose Mr. Boyd has told you who I am: Thomas Chandler, the Witless! Help them out, friend!" and he opened the door, and ushered his visitors into the house. "I don't know whether I have seats enough for you all—let me see. Yes, and one to spare. Now I'll leave you to pry into my domestic disarrangements as much as you like, while I go and see that Dab attends properly to the animals. Come on, Boyd, give them a fair chance to free their minds. They've never one of them been in 'a lodge in some vast wilderness' before, though I dare say they've all heard it Oh'd for."

While he delivered his remarks, Mr. Chandler had been picking up things that lay on the floor, putting wood upon the fire, shutting windows and so on, and when he had finished, he went out with Mr. Boyd, and there followed a free, animated expression of amusement, amazement, admiration, and curiosity.

"He's a brick, anyhow," was Dick's final verdict, and, in his view, no more than that need be said in any man's praise.

"Yes, indeed," echoed Carrie, "how nice he is; but how sad it is for him not to have anybody to care for his comfort. Why, this room looks worse than our dining-room ever does, when all the children have been at home from school for a day. Only to see that table, piled up with books and papers and mittens and clothes-brushes and stockings—I wonder if he mends his own stockings. O dear! I do wonder if he wouldn't like to have us clear up for him?"

"Those are pretty pictures, though," said Zandy, "and the fur-

niture is all nice, and the carpet might be pretty if it were clean; but do just look at the corners! I don't believe they are ever swept out."

"It is a dismal place, I think," said Grace, who had tucked up her dress so that it should not touch the floor.

The talk was still animated when Mr. Chandler and Mr. Boyd returned.

"Well!" exclaimed Mr. Chandler, "why haven't you taken off your coats and—caps? is that what you call those little jaunty round things on your heads? Come with me, and I'll show you a clean place to lay them. Perhaps you think there isn't such a spot in this den, but you wait and see;" and he led the way through five rooms, designating them as they passed, as the dining-room, where there was little but a table, and a chair or two; the kitchen, where Aminadab, in a clean white apron, was busy getting dinner; the store-room, where there were barrels and boxes, shelves of cans, and jars, and pots; the work-shop, full of benches and tools; and the dressing-room, where boots and shoes lay about, and clothes hung against the walls.

"Now we come to the place where you may lay your daintiest toggeries without fear," said Mr. Chandler, opening the door into his bedroom. "All my pains, in the housekeeping line, are expended upon this room, and I should like to know if you don't think I succeed pretty well."

"I think it is as nice and neat as can be," said Carrie, surveying the nicely-made bed, with its white counterpane, the cleanly-swept, pretty carpet, and the fresh muslin window-curtains, and the others joined in its praises.

"Well, I am happy to hear you commend my efforts. The parlor I surrender, once a month, to Dab's tender mercies, and am in a rage for a week after, because I never can find anything, till I get my effects conglomerated again. Ah, Miss Grace, you are looking for what you won't find! I never can remember to buy a looking-glass, and I ought to have one, so as to be able to recognize myself, if for no other reason. I actually didn't know my own face when I saw it in a shop, in Granby, the other day. I wondered what rough old curmudgeon that was, and lo! it was myself. If that view had been more flattering, I dare say I should have bought that very glass; but, as it was, I left the shop in disgust. Now I want to get ready for dinner, and I shall do nothing but prate, unless you leave me. My tongue seems to be loosed at both ends when I meet anybody that I can prate to, which I never do, except when you, friend Boyd, take pity on me."

While Mr. Chandler looked after Aminadab and his own

toilet, Mr. Boyd showed Zandy and Carrie some of the more rare and valuable books which the well-filled book-cases contained; while Dick, finding that Grace was rather pensive and cast down, set himself to banish the clouds from her pretty face.

"You don't seem very happy," he said. "I'm afraid you didn't care to come, or don't like it here, or something."

"I did want to come very much, but—"

"But what, Gracie? Let a fellow know what's going wrong, can't you?"

"It's nothing, much," replied Grace, "only I do want so much to see my dear papa sometimes, when I—I—feel as if nobody likes me."

"O Gracie!" exclaimed Dick with boyish warmth, "how can you think that? Why, dear me! I'm sure everybody has made such a fuss over you as never was. What has put such a notion into your head?"

"I think you like me, Dick, and I don't know but Mr. Boyd does, and Carrie; but Zandy almost hates me, I am sure."

"Oh, she doesn't," cried Dick.

"Hush!" whispered Grace, "they will hear you."

"But I know Zandy likes you, Grace. I will just ask her, the first chance I get."

"No, indeed! I wouldn't have you say a word for all the world. Please promise me, Dick."

Dick gave the promise, reluctantly.

"I don't want anybody to like me because they have to," said Grace, gently, "but I do love Zandy so very much, and I wanted her to care a little for me, but I *know* she doesn't"—and Grace's look and tone conveyed to Dick a very strong impression that Zandy had said or done something that either was unkind, or seemed so, to Grace.

He looked at Zandy, wondering what it could be, and at Grace, thinking that nobody ought ever to be cross to such a pretty, gentle little thing; and he said heartily, "Well, I like you, any way, and will do anything to please you and make you have a good time, and I know Zandy will come to like you, if she doesn't now."

"You are very good, Dick," said Grace, smiling sweetly upon her declared friend and ally, and just then Mr. Chandler came into the room.

"Don't look at me, don't!" he cried, in a comically deprecating tone; "I feel like a grizzly bear, rigged up in ermine. This is the first time I've had on broadcloth in nearly a score of years. You can't imagine that I was ever a dapper young man. I shouldn't wonder if my clothes are a little old-fash-

ioned. How is it, Boyd? do they look as if they had been made by an arkite tailor?"

"Why, the coat is rather short-waisted, and the tails are rather long; the collar is pretty high behind, and the sleeves are a trifle small. And, since you ask me, shirt-collars are not made to cut the ears now, and ties are rather more in vogue than satin stocks; and embroidered vests are gone by. But then, 'a man's a man for a' that, an' a' that;'" such was Mr. Boyd's laughing inventory and comment.

"That's a consolation! You are looking at my books," Mr. Chandler added, joining the group by the book-case, "my tried and trusty friends. They and I get on bravely. I take them for what they are worth, and we know what to expect of each other. Carrie, do you read much?" he asked, as his eye fell upon Carrie's earnest face, bent over a book he had given her to look at.

"Not very much," was the reply.

"You don't care for books, hey?"

Carrie looked up quickly, with a warm contradiction on her lips; but she saw from Mr. Chandler's eyes that he knew better, so she smiled rather sorrowfully, saying, "I only wish I could."

"What's to prevent?"

"A great many things," answered Carrie. "I don't have much time, for one thing."

"Too many beaux and parties, I suppose?"

Carrie only shook her head.

"Carrie is one of the useful ones," said Mr. Boyd; "she has too much to do for others, to do much for herself."

"I see," said Mr. Chandler, "brothers and sisters, and father and mother, all looking to her for everything; she must be here, there, and everywhere at once. Is that it, Mr. Boyd?"

"A very true account of our friend Carrie," was the reply.

"Well, Dab, what now?" asked Mr. Chandler, as Dab's black face appeared at the door.

"Dinner's on de table, mas' Chandler."

"Oh, dinner! to be sure. I had forgotten my fine clothes, and what I put them on for. That's encouraging, isn't it? looks as if I had been civilized once, and might be again if I chose. Carrie, will you allow me?"—and with many gallant airs he handed Carrie out to the table, Mr. Boyd and Dick following with Zandy and Grace.

"Is it the fashion now-a-days for housekeepers to apologize for their dinners?" asked Mr. Chandler, when they were seated, with the air of an anxious mistress-domo. "My cook was

chopping trees all the morning, but I hope you will find something you can eat."

The table was well set, and there was no lack of good things: nice white bread and sweet butter, fried chickens, cold ham, and a steak pie; and for dessert, coffee and canned fruits.

"There has been but little form and ceremony, but a great deal of brilliant conversation," said Mr. Chandler, as they left the table, at the end of an hour.

"To say nothing of the kind attention we have paid to your poor dinner," added Mr. Boyd. "I am afraid it isn't very good manners to speak of going home before you leave the dining-room, but I must get my charges back in good season, or I shall not be trusted with them again."

So in another half-hour they were stowed away in the sleigh, saying the last things.

"I suppose it would be impolite for me to wish you hadn't come," said Mr. Chandler; "but I declare I am half tempted to. You have made my den seem so unlike itself, that I don't know but I shall sleep on the snow under the pines to-night, I shall hate so to go in and find it empty."

"Oh," said Mr. Boyd, "I came very near forgetting a proposal I meant to make. I intend to bring these young people over to see the factories at Granby, and I wish you would meet us there and go about with us. You can tell them so much more than I can, in regard to the workings of things."

"Very good, so be it," was the ready response. "Only let me know in season. - Good-by all."

When they were gone, and Mr. Chandler was left to his solitude, it seemed to him that the tall dark pines had never moaned and sighed so dismally, and the hills never looked so lonely and solemn.

He went in, after listening and looking awhile, and talked with Aminadab about the work for the next day. Then, lighting his lamp before dark, and having taken up and thrown down half a dozen of his favorite books, he indulged in a dismal reverie, smoked one pipe instead of three, and went to bed at eight o'clock, calling himself by very hard names.

CHAPTER VII.

CLOUDS.

THE day before New Year's Grace and Dick were intent upon a game of chess, and Zandy sat by, looking on with little to say, and not a very happy face, when Corrie appeared, with a doll in her arms.

"Gracie," she said, "when will you make Hitabel's dress? She can't positively go to the party to-morrow 'less she has it to wear."

"Corrie," exclaimed Zandy, "why do you ask Grace to make that dress? I told you I would, and I am going to this afternoon."

"I'd rather Grace would," replied Corrie, "because, you see, she'll make it out of a lovely pink sash of hers, all pinked round the edges, and trim it with sweet balances lace; won't you, Gracie?"

"Yes, dear; we'll have a nice time this afternoon sewing for the dolly," said Grace, kissing Corrie, who threw her arms about her neck, and returned the caress with interest.

"Very well, Corrie; you need never ask me again to dress your dolls. When Grace is gone you can do it yourself," and Zandy retired to a lonely seat by the fire.

"You're bad and cross to-day," cried Corrie, running away to her play in the nursery.

All was still in the library for a few minutes, and then Grace cried triumphantly, clapping her hands: "Check, and check-mate!"

Dick examined the situation and said, rather soberly, "Yes, it is a check-mate, isn't it?"

"Indeed it is," returned Grace, "and that makes me two to your one. Zandy said I never could beat you. I am so glad I have!"

"I should think it was enough to beat, without making such a time about it," said Zandy from her seat by the fire; "I dare say Dick let you beat him."

"I didn't," exclaimed Dick. "I never worked so hard over a game with you, Zandy. Grace plays a better game than you do."

"Oh, I dare say *you* think so," returned Zandy.

"Zandy, what is the matter? I believe you are cross and bad, as Corrie says. Don't put up the men, Gracie; let's play again."

"No, I would rather not now," replied Grace gently, continuing to lay the pieces in the box, and looking very sober.

"Well, then, come and try the duet, and let Zandy have her cross fit to herself."

They went away, and for the next hour Zandy listened dismally to the strains of an overture they were learning, interrupted by the shouts of laughter Dick's blunders occasioned. At the end of that time Rachel came to say that Miss Hunter, her music-teacher, had come.

"O dear! I wish she was in Joppa," cried Zandy, without moving. "I can't take a lesson when Grace and Dick are playing."

"You know very well, Miss, that your grandma wouldn't wish you to lose your lesson on that account," replied Rachel.

"Where is Miss Hunter?"

"By the hall fire, Miss."

"Well, go and tell Grace and Dick that I must have the piano."

Now Zandy had not once touched the piano since her last lesson; and her teacher could hardly recognize her bright, interested pupil in the indifferent Zandy of that day.

"What has come over you, Alexandra?" she asked at last, in despair of arousing her from her listlessness.

"I am tired to death of the things I play," said Zandy. "I want to learn some of Chopin's and Beethoven's music, things that are worth playing."

"The music that Miss Gellert plays is too difficult for you now," replied Miss Hunter; "you will come to that by-and-by."

"Grace says she never played such—*stuff*, she calls it, and I don't see why I should have to."

"Really, Alexandra," said Miss Hunter, "if you cannot trust my taste and judgment, it is useless for me to continue to give you lessons."

Zandy sat silent a minute or two, holding an elbow in one hand, while the fingers of the other hand touched the keys carelessly; and Miss Hunter, thinking a struggle was going on, waited to see the result.

At length, with a toss of her head and a defiant sparkle in her eyes, Zandy said:—

"If Grace were to stay here, I should *wish* to stop taking

lessons. She laughs at my music, and I don't mean to touch the piano until she is gone."

Miss Hunter was a wise woman, and remembered her own girlish tempers too well to deliver her rebellious pupil, at once, to higher authority. She only said, quietly: "Well, Alexandra, I cannot compel you to practise, and I can't give you pieces that are too hard for you. I can only wait, hoping that you will feel happier about it when I come again."

For a moment after Miss Hunter was gone, Zandy felt quite elated over her victory; but depression quickly ensued, and as she stood at the window watching her teacher's receding figure, her own behavior and the feelings she had been indulging all the morning grew in heinousness in her eyes, until she had a confused impression of herself as made up, altogether, of bad temper and cross words and unlovely deeds; and to get rid of thinking about herself any longer, she went in search of somebody to talk to.

"Where is grandmamma, Rachel?" she asked, finding nobody in the library, or in her grandmother's room.

"She's not got home yet. She went with your grandpa to the village, a spell ago."

So Zandy went to the nursery, where Corrie was intent upon her motherly cares. "Dear little Corrie," she said, taking her little sister's face between her two hands and kissing her heartily; "I am glad Hitabel is going to have such a pretty pink silk dress. I'll help Grace to make it, this afternoon."

"I don't want you to make her goodest dress, Zandy. You can make calico, and such dresses; but Grace knows just how grand ladies dress in New York, and so 'course she can make fitter things to go visiting with."

"Where are Grace and Dick?" asked Zandy, some of the sweetness dying out of her face and voice.

"Gone to ride," replied Corrie, putting the last of her eleven children to bed, wrapped in a towel, as its night-gown was in the wash-basin.

"Whom have they gone with?" asked Zandy.

"With Miss Flyte—and themselves—and the little sleigh—that's all," replied Corrie, climbing up in a chair, and proceeding with her washing.

Zandy left the nursery hastily, and shutting herself in her own room, threw herself on the bed, giving vent, in sobs and moans, to the tempest raging within.

It seemed a very long time that she had lain there, when Corrie called, "Zandy, Zandy! where are you? grandma wants you."

She lay still, hoping that Corrie would go somewhere else to look for her; but she came into the room, and when she saw Zandy on the bed, and discovered that she had been crying, was distressed enough.

"What is the matter, poor Zandy?" she said, in a grieved voice. "Have you got the ear-ache, or is it a felon?"

Corrie was a victim herself to frequent attacks of ear-ache, and Rachel had suffered tortures from a felon some time before; and Corrie could think of no other causes for tears just then.

"No, no, Corrie, it is nothing," Zandy replied; but Corrie went to her grandmother with the tidings that Zandy was crying; "and I do feel so mis'able because I told her she was bad this morning."

Mrs. Craighead went to Zandy's room, and they had a little talk, after which Zandy sat alone in her room really fighting, as well as she knew how, with her dislike for Grace, and jealousy of her influence over Dick, until she heard their voices down stairs; and then, while she bathed her face and brushed her hair, she heard somebody run up to her grandmother's room, and run down again in great haste, and met Rosa in the hall with pillows and flannels; and she found Grace lying on the sofa in the library, her foot swollen and red, and Mrs. Craighead bathing it, while Dick stood by as pale, and looking nearly as distressed, as Grace herself.

Dick told Zandy in a whisper that Grace's ankle was sprained, and Zandy thought, with keen sympathy, how dreadful the pain must be in a foot that looked like that.

When tea-time came, the pain was somewhat eased, so that Grace could be left with Rachel and Rosa; and then Dick told how it happened. They had stopped to see the skating on the lake, and Grace had wished to learn to skate. So Dick had put on a pair of skates for her, and when she tried to stand, her ankle had turned.

Zandy said nothing, but she thought, with a swelling heart, of a great many things she would do and give up for Grace's sake.

When the letters were brought in after tea, there was one for Mr. Craighead from William, and as he opened it and read, the expression of his face made his wife go to him in great dread, and look over his shoulder. The first words that caught her eye would have called forth a shocked exclamation if Mr. Craighead had not laid a warning hand on hers: "Mr. Gellert died in Paris last month, and the news has just reached me." She read no further until her husband had finished the letter.

"I have no particulars," William wrote, "except that he was

ill but a short time, and was fortunately with friends. It is a sad thing for poor Grace, notwithstanding that Mr. Gellert was not a particularly affectionate father; for she is actually without a near relative in the world, now, except Louisa. I am anxious to have your advice, mother, as to what is best to do. A letter from Louisa tells me that she cannot bring Helen north till late in the spring; and I am inclined to say nothing to her, at present, of Mr. Gellert's death, unless you can keep Grace with you until she comes home. She will either feel that she must come at once to look after Grace and comfort her, or, if she stays, she will feel troubled and anxious to think of the child's being at school, in the first of her grief. If it will not be taxing you too much, the very best arrangement would be for Grace to remain with you; then I will inform Louisa, without delay, of the matter," etc.

"I little thought," Mrs. Craighead said to her husband, when she had seen Grace, all unconscious of her bereavement, safely in bed and left her to Rosalie's competent care—"I little thought that I should have my wish to keep Grace with us granted by such means. I must believe that God has some good in store for her and us all, that He chooses to bring about in this inscrutable way."

Nobody thought of wishing "Happy New-Year" the next morning except Grace, who wondered at the sober faces, and the quiet way in which her greetings were received. There was a hush through the house; everybody stepped softly and spoke in subdued tones; and Grace began to think that a sprained ankle was even more serious than it had seemed to her. But before night she learned that the sprained ankle was the least of her troubles; and when she lay sobbing in Mrs. Craighead's arms, her comfort was that she was not to go back to the convent, but was to stay with her new friends.

CHAPTER VIII.

SURPRISES.

MR. BOYD came to the Craigheads' one evening late in January, to arrange for the proposed visit to Mr. Chandler and the Granby factories. Grace's foot was very nearly well, but Mrs. Craighead thought she was hardly strong enough for such an expedition; and, indeed, she did look very fragile in her deep-mourning dress.

Dick said he must stay at home and study his lessons for Monday.

"You don't generally think you must study Saturdays," said Zandy, quickly.

"I have got to to-morrow," Dick answered.

"So, Zandy, you and I and Carrie are to have all the fun and profit to ourselves," said Mr. Boyd. "We feel very sorry for you and Grace, Dick, and I know Mr. Chandler will be disappointed not to see you, as I led him to expect us all. I have strong hopes," he added, turning to Mr. Craighead, "that Mr. Chandler will accede to the plans we have talked of. He seems to be coming to the point, though I have not referred to the subject lately. I thought it best to let other influences have a chance to work."

"The children's visits are to help," suggested Mrs. Craighead.

"Very much," responded Mr. Boyd.

"No doubt," said Mr. Craighead; "but the sooner the influences act, the better I shall like it. The machinery must be renewed in the spring, and I am confident that improvements could be made; and if your friend has the needful knowledge, and would undertake it, nothing could be better, as he is right there, and has no other interests to divide his time."

"And it would be such a good way to win him back to a useful life," said Mrs. Craighead, "interesting him again in his favorite pursuits."

"It would be a great relief to me to know that he would take Smith's place, as general superintendent, when he leaves it," said Mr. Craighead.

"I really believe he will not be disposed to refuse," said Mr.

Boyd. "The niche seems too clearly made for him; he will feel compelled to step into it."

Saturday proved a lovely day, as bright as sunshine and sparkling snow, and the glistening fringes of hoar-frost, with which every branch and twig was adorned, could make it; and Mr. Boyd took an early start with Zandy and Carrie, expecting to go first to Pine Valley, and take Mr. Chandler back with them to Granby. But, as they drove through the village, they found Mr. Chandler there, on the watch for them.

"My knees were beginning to knock together with fear lest you should go to my den by some other road, and I should miss you," he said, as he took his seat beside Mr. Boyd in the sleigh.

"I knew of no other direct road," replied Mr. Boyd; "that is all that saved you."

"A notable instance of the bliss of ignorance," returned Mr. Chandler. "It came into my head upon my bed last night, that I would set Dab to cleaning the parlor—though the month won't be up till next week—and that I would come and meet you and go to the factories, and then take you home to a swept and garnished house, and a good dinner. So I routed Dab up at an unearthly hour, and left him at daylight, shrouded in dust. Why didn't Grace and Dick come, too?"

"Grace is not very well," replied Mr. Boyd; "she sprained her ankle a month ago, and has hardly recovered yet. And a great trouble has befallen her in the death of her father. The news came from Paris soon after we were here."

"Poor child!" said Mr. Chandler, shaking his head sadly. "Does she take it very much to heart?"

"She looks very pale, and has seemed quiet and subdued when I have seen her. How is it, Zandy? does she grieve very much?"

Mr. Boyd was sorry he had appealed to Zandy, when he saw the curl of her lip and heard her reply: "I don't know, I am sure. She cries every day—when things don't please her. I suppose she feels bad."

"Well, what about Dick?" asked Mr. Chandler, giving Zandy a curious look from under his shaggy brows. "He hasn't a sprained ankle too, has he?"

"He stayed at home with Grace," Zandy replied quickly.

Zandy had been very happy during the ride to Granby, except for the first few minutes after they left Dick and Grace, too absorbed in their secret plans for the day to do more than respond hastily to their "good-bys." The cloud that came with Mr. Chandler's reference to them passed away soon, and Carrie herself was hardly more interested in what they saw in the fac-

stories than Zandy, though she cared less for Mr. Chandler's discourings as to the principles of things. She delighted in the noise and the results. The power of the machinery, and the mystery of its workings, were what fascinated her, and filled her with a vague sort of ecstasy.

"This," said Mr. Chandler to Mr. Boyd, calling his attention to some part of the machinery, "puts me in a rage. Its imperfection affects me very much as it would you to have a man walk into your pulpit and preach false doctrines. I can't bear to see a beautiful principle imperfectly applied."

"No false doctrines will be preached in my pulpit while I have power to keep them out," said Mr. Boyd. "And I consider myself bound to do my utmost to prevent falsehood and remedy imperfections." After a pause, he added:

"Mr. Craighead is waiting anxiously to know if you will undertake to remedy the imperfections here. Will you go home with me to-night, and spend a quiet Sunday, and see Mr. Craighead on Monday?"

It was a sudden impulse that had led Mr. Boyd to "storm the citadel," as he said to himself.

Mr. Chandler walked away a few steps, but came back presently. "My good friend," he said, "I can't do it. I mean to say that I can't go home with you to-night. I am not fit. I don't want to look like a savage, when I appear among civilized people. Do you go to an Oxley tailor?" he asked, carefully examining the texture of Mr. Boyd's coat.

The sudden transition to simple curiosity in Mr. Chandler's tone took Mr. Boyd by surprise, and the conversation ended with a laugh, and they soon left the factory; and as it was the end of their round, they were ready to start for Pine Valley.

Mr. Boyd had just taken the reins, and was standing by, waiting for Mr. Chandler to take his seat in the sleigh, when a pair of large mules, attached to a long, noisy lumber-sled, were startled suddenly from a shed at a little distance by their boy driver, and came dashing and clattering past at a furious rate.

The horses took fright and sprang aside, throwing Mr. Chandler down, and dragging the reins from Mr. Boyd's hand. The continued clatter of the sled and the screams of the girls frightened them still more; and before Mr. Boyd could regain the reins, or Mr. Chandler recover from the bewildering effect of his sudden fall, they dashed madly away, with a spring that nearly lifted the sleigh from the ground.

Mr. Chandler and Mr. Boyd, with no loss of time, took the first thing that offered in the way of a vehicle, and started with all speed after the runaways, filled with unspeakable fears for

the poor girls, knowing that nothing short of a miracle could save their lives.

Their first view of Zandy would have caused a smile, if they had been a bit less anxious, for she sat in a heap in the middle of the road, with her turban askew, waving her hands wildly, to indicate that she wished not to be run over. To their great relief she was unhurt, though pale and trembling from her terrible fright.

She knew nothing of Carrie, except that she was in the sleigh when she herself fell out, and Mr. Chandler whipped up his team, leaving Mr. Boyd with Zandy. He discovered Carrie, about half a mile farther on, lying pale and motionless in the snow; and saw that the sleigh, a complete wreck, was not far off, and the horses stood steaming and panting against a fence, at a sudden turn in the road.

Carrie opened her eyes and smiled faintly when Mr. Chandler spoke to her, and tried to help herself when he lifted her; but it hurt her to move. Mr. Chandler spread the robes, which he rescued from the ruined sleigh, upon the ox-sled, and laying Carrie tenderly upon them, went back with her to Zandy and Mr. Boyd.

They met dozens of people coming to see the result of the runaway, and with kind offers of any service they could render.

"Where's the doctor, my man?" asked Mr. Chandler of one. "If you can get him for us, we shall be glad."

"He isn't to home, sir. He's gone off five miles, and won't be back afore night."

Mr. Chandler looked very much troubled. "What shall we do, Boyd?" he asked. "Hadn't we better stop at some house here, with some of these good people, and wait for the doctor?"

"Take me home, do," pleaded Carrie, who had overheard part of Mr. Chandler's questions. "I had a great deal rather go home."

"I am afraid you can't bear the long ride, my child," said Mr. Chandler.

"Yes, I can; let me go home," urged Carrie. "I don't want any strange doctor, and I know I can bear the ride."

So a comfortable sleigh was provided, and Mr. Boyd's horses were brought, too thoroughly tired out to be anything but tractable; and having eaten of the bountiful dinner prepared for them by the superintendent's wife, they started for Oxley. Zandy felt quite strong enough to sit in the front seat with Mr. Boyd, and Carrie was supported in an easy position by Mr. Chandler's strong, kind arms.

They were obliged to drive so slowly to avoid jolts and jars, as well as because of the condition of the horses, that it was quite dark when they stopped at Mr. Reynolds's door.

"Have we got home?" asked Carrie, roused from a little doze by the stopping of the sleigh.

"Yes; here we are. Don't try to help yourself, child," said Mr. Chandler.

Mr. Boyd sent Zandy in to tell Mrs. Reynolds what had happened, and then he and Mr. Chandler lifted Carrie, and bore her in with great care. Her mother and two or three of the younger children met them at the door.

"O dear! O dear!" said Mrs. Reynolds, wringing her hands, and beginning to cry when she saw Carrie. "What is the matter of her? She isn't dead, is she? O dear! what shall I do! what shall I do!"

As she and the children were effectually blocking the way, so that Mr. Chandler and Mr. Boyd were kept standing at the door, Mr. Chandler suggested that the best thing she could do was to let them come in, and the next, to show them where they could put Carrie.

"Oh, it's dreadful!" she cried, pushing the children aside, and looking about in a helpless way. "I might have known something would happen if I let her go. Come in here; she can lie on my bed," and she opened a door leading from the disorderly dining-room. "I've been lying down, and the bed hasn't been smoothed up," she said, as Zandy gathered her arms full of things, and threw them on the floor in a corner. "O dear! who would have thought such a dreadful thing could happen! I'm sure, I thought I had trouble enough already."

By this time Carrie was laid upon the bed, and she looked so pale and lifeless that Mr. Chandler thought she had fainted, and demanded some cologne or camphor, or some water. But Carrie opened her eyes, and said she wasn't faint.

"I will go for the doctor," said Mr. Boyd, "and take Zandy home. Mrs. Craighead will be anxious. You will stay till I come back, Mr. Chandler?"

"Of course," replied Mr. Chandler, emphatically: "do you think I would leave her—to her mother's tender mercies?" he thought, but did not say it aloud.

As he sat beside her, gently stroking her hair, he took in the whole dreary picture: the costly house, ill-kept and abused; the children, ill-bred and rude; the mother, weak and selfish—poverty-stricken in all womanly qualities. Carrie seemed to him like a primrose in a bed of rank weeds.

Mr. Reynolds came in with Mr. Boyd and the doctor; and

Mr. Chandler moved away to let them come to the bedside, and stood in the shade at a little distance, regarding the scene. Mr. Reynolds leaned over, and laid the back of his cold hand on Carrie's forehead and cheek, making her start and shiver, and then made way for the doctor.

"I hope there are no bones broken, doctor," he said; "if there are not, she'll get up right off. Broken bones are slow to mend. They ought to have stayed in the sleigh. It's the jumping out that makes runaways dangerous, and that's what women always do—scream and jump—that's their instinct;" he rubbed his hands and then put them under his coat-tails, and backed up against the fireplace, as if there had been a fire there, which there was not.

"Your daughter couldn't very well stay in the sleigh, when there was nothing left of it," said Mr. Chandler.

"Oh—of course not! I didn't—ah—know, ah—exactly how it happened. I—ah—hadn't heard the particulars."

When Mr. Chandler had spoken, Mr. Reynolds became, for the first time, aware of his presence; and the sight of the tall figure in gray, and meeting the clear blue eyes, seemed quite to upset his equanimity; and having stammered out his reply, and drawn his coat-tails around to the side with a sorry assumption of ease, he dropped them hastily and left the room.

The doctor, having made a careful examination, said he could not tell at once how serious Carrie's injuries were, or just what they were; but she must be kept very quiet, and have the best of nursing, and he would see her again early in the morning.

"She'll have no quiet here, doctor," said Mr. Chandler; "she must be taken up stairs to some out-of-the-way room; and she must have a nurse, what's more."

"You are quite right," responded the doctor. "Both those things are essential."

"We will see to the moving, then," said Mr. Chandler; and turning to Mrs. Reynolds, who sat rocking forlornly in the corner, he said, "Madam, Dr. Parr says that your daughter must have quiet, and I will trouble you to go with me and show me the quietest room in the house, and let me see if it is ready for her."

He went towards the door, and Mrs. Reynolds followed, saying, "I don't know, I'm sure, what room there is, unless it's Carrie's, and Susie and Martha sleep there, but I don't know as that would make any difference."

"It would make all the difference between possible and impossible, unless they could be turned out. Show me the spare room."

"O dear! I couldn't have her there! The idea of using the spare chamber for sickness!"

"You will at least let me see it;" and Mrs. Reynolds did let him see it, protesting all the time.

"This is the very place for her," exclaimed Mr. Chandler, when he had taken one look at the bright carpet, lace curtains and handsome furniture. "We will have a fire here directly, and when the chill is off we will bring her up. Is there a servant that can make a fire?"

"I don't believe there is. Bridget is out and won't get home till bed-time; and Ann is hurrying up Mr. Reynolds's supper, it makes him so put-out to have to wait. There's never been a fire in the spare room."

"Hasn't there? Well, it will be made first in a good cause," said Mr. Chandler, as they reached the dining-room again. "Is this the way to the kitchen regions? Yes, I see." Mrs. Reynolds had a will of her own, which she exercised at times of spasmodic, short-lived energy; but she would as soon have thought of resisting a whirlwind as Mr. Chandler; and in meek despair she saw the wood and coal taken up stairs, and by-and-by heard Mr. Chandler's cheerful announcement that the room was warm, and everything ready for the removal.

Carrie could hardly believe the evidence of her own senses, when she found herself in actual possession of so much comfort and elegance, and said she should feel like a grand princess, and hardly deign to speak to ordinary mortals. Her anxious glance at her mother's dismal face and drooping figure was answered by Mr. Boyd, who said that he was sure Mrs. Reynolds was not able to take charge of Carrie night and day, and he should see that a good nurse was provided without delay. He would bring Miss Bean for that night; and Carrie was relieved, for she and Miss Bean were very good friends.

When Mr. Boyd and Mr. Chandler left the house, they walked on in silence for some minutes, Mr. Boyd having several little cares in mind. Mr. Chandler broke it by saying, "When Carrie told me her name, the first time I saw her, I thought she said Raynals."

"There is hardly any difference in the sound of the names," said Mr. Boyd.

"No; but there's a deal of difference in the spelling. Mr. Reynolds is my false friend, and his lovely wife is my old lady-love. Heaven be praised that she is not *my* wife, and also that Reynolds has got her! though that is rejoicing over a fallen foe with a vengeance, isn't it?"

Mr. Boyd fairly stood still when he heard Mr. Chandler's

announcement, and then walked on in speechless amazement. When they reached his door he mechanically opened it, and waited for Mr. Chandler to enter; but he started back, exclaiming, "See here, Boyd, what am I doing? I'm not going into your house. In the name of all that's respectable, show me an inn where I can bide till to-morrow, and then I'll walk back to my den."

"I will show you no inn, my friend, and you will not see your den until Monday."

"At least, promise not to show me to anybody in this boorish array. If you do, I shall never come to Oxley again."

"The two nice old ladies that I live with are not easily frightened, I assure you, and you shall not be called upon to appear in public until your vanity is satisfied."

On Monday Mr. Craighead and Mr. Chandler had a long interview, the results of which were all that Mr. Boyd desired. Mr. Chandler also saw Carrie, and learned that the doctor was, on the whole, encouraged to believe that her injuries were not serious, and that good nursing and perfect quiet were all she needed, though her recovery might be slow and tedious.

"Will she be sure to have good care?" Mr. Chandler asked.

"I think you may trust us," replied Mr. Boyd.

Mr. Chandler saw no more of Mr. Reynolds during that visit in Oxley, though Mr. Reynolds saw Mr. Chandler enter the gate from the window of Carrie's room, where he happened to be at the time talking with Mrs. Craighead, who had called to see Carrie. He saw him leave the house, too, from the closed shutters of the cold, dark drawing-room, where he had spent a shivering hour of suspense, his attention divided between the window and the door; for since he knew of "the insolent fellow's having been to the kitchen, and given orders as if it were his own house," he felt that no place was quite safe from his intrusion.

CHAPTER IX.

WOE WORTH THE DAY.

MARCH had come in like a very rampant lion, and though two weeks had passed, there were yet no signs of the lamb-like meekness with which, according to the proverb, it was to go out. It seemed as if Winter, enraged at having to resign his sway, was determined to hold it as long as possible, and to storm and bluster to his turbulent heart's content till the bitter end.

He might really have conquered a new lease of his sceptre, to judge from the wild scene upon which Zandy looked out one Saturday, as she sat in the deep window of the library—so busy and bold were his emissaries, so fiercely did Boreas rage, dashing the sleet and snow about in noisy gusts, and making the trees bend and writhe before his onsets.

Zandy's restless attention was divided between her book, the storm without and Dick, who sat nearer the fire, absorbed in cutting a little bracket, of delicate pattern, from a piece of apple-wood.

Dick was clearly unconscious of anything but his work; but if he so much as raised his head to toss the hair from his forehead, Zandy's eyes were instantly as intent upon her book as if nothing ever had interested her so much.

The cheerful crackling and ruddy glow of the fires in the hall and library, and the pleasant warmth and general air of comfort through all the house, made a charming contrast to the gloom without. But one might speedily have discerned new proof of the mournful impotence of bright surroundings to make happy hearts.

As Grace came slowly down the stairs, Dick's voice met her ear, saying, "Zandy, just you run up to my room, and bring me two of these little wire saws. I must have left them on my bureau, and I don't want to get up."

"Why don't you ask Grace? She would go for you," Zandy's voice replied.

"I know she would in a minute," returned Dick. "If she were here I shouldn't ask you. She's a great deal more obliging than you are, now-a-days."

At that Grace's eyes brightened, and she smiled, listening to hear what came next.

"Of course she is obliging and amiable, and everything that I am not. I know you think so."

"Well, who could help it? You haven't been good-natured a whole day at a time for weeks; and Grace is never cross."

"O dear, how tiresome!" cried Zandy, impatiently; and then with a sudden change of tone, she said, "I will sing you a little hymn I made over the other day; see if it isn't nice and appropriate;" and to the crooked mazes of old "Cranbrooke" she sung:—

" Grace, 'tis an odious sound,
Distressing for to hear;
Ears with her praises do resound
Most more than they can bear."

Dick stopped his work and looked at Zandy while she sung, at first disposed to laugh at the droll unction with which she rendered her made-over hymn; but by the time she had finished it he was angry, and exclaimed indignantly, "You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Zandy. I didn't think you could be so spiteful."

"Oh, yes! I am disobliging and spiteful, and Grace is sweet and generous," said Zandy, in a bitter tone. "She is mean enough to me to make up for her sweetness to the rest of you, and I have good reason to hate her, and I do, and I wish she had never set her foot inside of this house."

"I should like to know what Grace has ever done to make you talk like that," said Dick. "I never have seen her do a thing that wasn't nice."

"Of course you haven't," replied Zandy, with a pain in her throat; "you all like her so much you can't see that she has a fault, and she likes you, and never shows her hateful side to you."

"If she wasn't kind to you, I think we should see it," said Dick.

"That is just what grandmamma thinks; she is sure she treats me just as she ought to; but I know better."

Zandy's quoting her grandmother's opinion at that juncture was unfortunate for her cause, for it proved a strong reinforcement to Dick's convictions of her injustice; and he demanded again some proofs of Grace's unkindness. Zandy waited a minute, restraining by a great effort the tears that were ready to break forth, and then said, vehemently: "I hate her most because she has taken *you* away from me. We used to have

such nice times together, and you cared more for me than for anybody else, and now you never want to talk to me or be with me. You only want Grace, and I cannot bear it, indeed I cannot."

It was the first time Zandy had put into words her sense of loss with regard to her idolized Dick, and no one could have doubted the sharpness of the pain that wrung them from her now. That Dick was not impelled to go to her instantly, and comfort her poor heart by telling her that he did love her as much as ever, and knew that she was a great deal better worth loving than Grace, and that their good times should begin again that minute, was surely a proof of the doctrine of total depravity, or that an evil spell rested over them which could not be easily broken. It is sadly true, that after one pang of pity for his unhappy sister, and two or three sharp pricks of conscience, came a feeling of boyish triumph in his power over her; and he said carelessly: "Oh, it's jealousy, is it? I'd be ashamed to tell of it, if I were you, and I'd get over it as soon as ever I could;" and then went to sawing as if the subject were finally dismissed.

The tears that were falling fast when Dick began to speak, quickly dried from Zandy's burning cheeks and flashing eyes; and with one look at Dick, and one out into the storm, she threw down her book and left the library without a word. Dick suspended his sawing; quite taken aback by this sudden and unexpected end to the interview. It is not unlikely that he might have given Zandy some token of his favor, if she had sued for it with sufficient meekness, and shown a little more of the wound his coldness had made.

"She might have given a fellow a chance," he said to himself, "and not gone off in a pet like that. I'll make it all right, though. Let me see—I'd give her this bracket, only I told Grace I was making it for her. I might learn that William Tell overture with her, but Grace likes it so much, and asked me to learn it with her—oh, well, I'll find ways enough," and Dick went on with his work.

The sudden silence in the library had sent Grace flying noiselessly up stairs, and almost before Zandy reached the hall, she was safely shut in her own room.

Standing before the glass, her elbows leaning on the bureau, she smiled at the image of her pretty self—cheeks flushed with the sudden rush up stairs, rosy lips parted, showing the little white teeth, and eyes bright with the excitement of the eaves-dropping and the escape. She touched a fair curl here and there, and whispered to the image: "O dear! I do wish

Rosalie were here: I never can fix my hair as prettily as she did. It was too bad of Mrs. Craighead to send her away. I can't bear to have Rachel touch me—clumsy, cross old thing. What a time Dick and Zandy have had, though! I should think she would hate him now. I should, anybody that treated me so when I tried to make him sorry. I don't see how she can see that I don't like her; I *do* sort of like her—any way I don't hate her, only—I wish my eyes were the color of Zandy's and hers different; 'golden hazel,' Mr. Boyd calls them, and it's such a nice *sounding* color. But when we are in society together we'll see whose will do the most execution, her golden hazel, or my blue ones;" and she drooped her long lashes, and suddenly lifted them, and smiled with great satisfaction at the effect. "I wonder if Zandy's hair will grow as long as it was before. Mine is pretty, but it isn't very long or thick. Why! who has gone out in this dreadful storm, I wonder! I do declare if it isn't Zandy."

She watched Zandy make her way against the wind and sleet for a few moments, and then went down to the library.

"Oh, are you working at that bracket all this time, Dick?" she said; "it is too bad for you to spend all your holiday so. Where has Zandy gone?"

"Gone! I didn't know she had gone anywhere," answered Dick.

"Yes, she has. I saw her go towards the village."

Dick jumped up and ran to the window and looked out anxiously, while Grace said, "Oh, she was out of sight long ago. Maybe your grandmother sent her somewhere."

"No, indeed!" cried Dick, "she would be worried to death if she knew Zandy had gone out in such weather. Well, it can't be helped now," and he went back to his work, "but I can't see the use of her cutting up such didos."

"It's too bad," said Grace. "I am so afraid she will take cold. I hope she hasn't gone far."

"That sounds greatly like Grace's hating her," thought Dick.

Meanwhile Zandy made her toilsome way towards Mr. Reynolds's, taking perverse satisfaction in the storm, and the fact that her feet were getting wet through. If she should have some dreadful fever and almost die Dick would feel bad, and be sorry he hadn't been kinder. But presently it occurred to her that she might *really* die, and, struck with sudden terror, she ran as fast as the wind and the slippery paths would let her, until she stood at Mr. Reynolds's door. Mart let her in, and assailed her with exclamations and questions; but she rushed past him up to Carrie's room.

"Why, Zandy Craighead," cried Carrie, fairly aghast at the sight of her, "what made you come out on such a day?"

Zandy, breathless and conscience-stricken, hurried off her wet cloak, and sat down by the fire to dry her feet, without explaining.

"Take off your boots, dear. How dreadful for you to get so wet. I wish the fire was better. Charlie, won't you run down and get some wood, and make it burn?"

Charlie being upon his head in the middle of Carrie's bed, with two of the other children assisting to hold his feet in the air, could hardly be expected to heed, if he heard, his sister's request; and when Carrie looked around from her seat by the dull fire, she exclaimed hopelessly, "O dear! how you children do behave. Susie, you run down, there's a good girl. Zandy will surely take cold, if she doesn't get warm and dry soon."

"I don't want to," whined Susie, who was playing "go-to-see" in another part of the room, surrounded by things collected from all parts of the house.

"I shall have to go myself," said Carrie, rising feebly from her chair, and drawing her shawl about her.

"You won't do any such thing," cried Zandy; "sit right down this minute," and she pushed Carrie gently back into her chair. "Lend me your slippers, and I will go." The girls laughed when Zandy had put them on, and she went shuffling through the hall and down to the kitchen, and soon returned with a cup of ginger tea, and followed by a slovenly servant with the wood.

In a few minutes the girls were toasting their faces and feet at a bright fire, and, Zandy's terrors allayed by the dose of hot tea, they fell into their usual busy flow of talk, unmindful of the noise of the children, which, alas! poor Carrie was too much accustomed to; for since she had been well enough to do without a nurse, her room had been the children's gathering-place whenever they were out of school, and the noise and confusion she was obliged to submit to could not be described.

Mrs. Reynolds had soon settled down into despondent submission as to her spare room, and made but feeble complaints when she saw the carpet being soiled, the curtains torn and crumpled and the furniture broken. Carrie had several times proposed going into her own room, but her mother always said she couldn't be bothered moving her about from one place to another; that the room was ruined, and that was the end of it.

"Mr. Chandler was here yesterday, just after you went away," said Carrie by-and-by. "It is so good of him to come; that makes four times he has been here since I was hurt."

"I wish I could see him again," said Zandy.

"He said yesterday, that just as soon as I am well enough, he wants us all to come there again; he is going to leave Pine Valley and live in Grauby, you know, and he says he means to have me for his house-keeper and daughter, but of course that is only one of his jokes."

"I wish you could live with him," said Zandy, "and let me come and make you a very long visit—as long as Grace is at grandfather's."

"And what do you think?" continued Carrie; "last night father was here when Mr. Chandler and Mr. Boyd came in, and was going out of the room for something; but Mr. Chandler held out his hand to him, and said he was sure he couldn't have forgotten Thomas Chandler, and that he hoped father was as glad to have met him again as he was to meet father."

"Were they old friends?" asked Zandy.

"Yes, and they hadn't met for years and years, and it had happened that father was out each time that Mr. Chandler came, except that first night, and then there was so much confusion. And then when mother came in a little while after, never thinking that anybody was here, all bundled up in a shawl and a mussy cap on that she had been lying down in, Mr. Chandler jumped up and said he had waited long enough for *Susan Coles* to recognize him, and now he would thank her husband to introduce him. And so father did, and mother apologized for not having recognized him before, but she had been so worried about me, or something."

"Were they friends when your mother was young?" asked Zandy.

"Yes indeed, more than friends," replied Carrie. "I asked ma about it afterwards, and she said she believed Mr. Chandler was an old sweetheart of hers; but that she had so many, when she was a girl, she had almost forgotten him."

"Was she pretty when she was a young lady?" asked Zandy.

"Yes, she must have been, or she couldn't have had so many lovers," answered Carrie; and her little sigh, as she gazed into the fire, was caused by a passing fear that she should never have *one*, even, she was so plain and unattractive. "Grace will have plenty, won't she?" she added after a pause, and thinking that Zandy would, too, for she was even prettier than Grace.

"I suppose so, and she will try her best to get other people's besides," said Zandy, bitterly.

"Oh, Zandy dear," cried Carrie, "don't speak so. I forgot that you didn't like Grace, or I shouldn't have said a word about

her in this dear little visit. But do try and feel kindly towards her, darling, even if she seems unkind and unlovely to you."

"If you could just know all she has done, you wouldn't wonder that I can't bear her," said Zandy, with an expression in her face that her friend was sorry to see.

"Do you care to tell me?—Could I help you any?" asked Carrie, gently.

"No, I can't tell. Nothing would help me, except to begin back at Christmas and have her spend her holidays at the convent, and never come near me. I wish she had taken the black veil before ever Aunt Louisa went South;" and Zandy began to put on her boots and get ready to go home.

"Poor Zandy!" said Carrie, so full of sympathy that it made her have feverish flushes; "I am so sorry. But if it is so bad, and you bear it all patiently and forgive it all, you will be happier than you can think."

"I am not good like you, Carrie," said Zandy, as she buttoned her sack, "and I can't forgive Grace until—I get back what she has—stolen from me. I don't mean *really* stolen," she cried, laughing in spite of her dismal feeling, at sight of Carrie's look of horror. "I mean that she has—*got Dick*. There! now you know!" and she kissed Carrie in a hurry, and was soon on her way home through the unabated storm.

"Perhaps grandmamma won't mind, when she knows I've been to Carrie's," she thought, as, with much trepidation of heart, she entered the house by the kitchen hall, and went quietly up to her room to change her wet clothes. As soon as she was presentable, she went in search of her grandmother, thinking that the sooner she received her reproofs and had it over with, the better. The first person she met was her grandfather.

"Alexandra, what do you mean by going out in such a storm as this?" he asked, sternly; "your grandmother has been ill with a nervous headache all the afternoon, and hearing of your unaccountable behavior has made her worse."

"I am very sorry, grandpapa; I know I oughtn't to have gone," said Zandy, too remorseful at the thought of her grandmother's headache to be roused to defiance, as she generally was by her grandfather's rebukes, which were not frequent.

"Your ill-nature and perverseness lately have given us altogether too much discomfort, and there must be an end of it at once. Go and let Rachel know that you have come, so that she can tell your grandmother."

Zandy went sorrowfully and humbly to her grandmother's door, which was ajar, and pushing it open a little farther, she

looked into the darkened room, and saw that her grandmother lay on the bed, and that Grace was stroking her head, and Dick sat by with the cologne bottle. Grace put her finger on her lips, and motioned her to be quiet; but Mrs. Craighead heard the step, and asked if Zandy had come.

"Yes, grandma, I am here," said Zandy, "and I am so sorry you have the headache."

"I am glad you have come, dear. You have made me very anxious."

"Can I soothe your head now, grandmamma?" asked Zandy, longing to push Grace away, and have a chance to kiss her grandmother, and gain her forgiveness.

"No, dear, let Grace do it," said Mrs. Craighead, feeling that Zandy ought to suffer for her wrong-doing.

Zandy stood awhile, watching in jealous misery the motions of Grace's hands, and then went away to think over her troubles, and wonder if she should ever get rid of the aches and pains that filled her heart. It really seemed as if she never could be happy again.

Some time before, when Grace had recovered from the sprain, and seemed in need of diversion and occupation, she had entered school with Dick and Zandy; and as she was quick and bright in her studies, and obliging and gentle in her ways, she soon became a favorite with teachers and scholars. She was in the same classes with Dick and Zandy, who had always kept pace in their studies, and so the intangible friction that kept poor Zandy's mind in turmoil, went on in school as well as at home. But after that stormy Saturday things moved with outward smoothness, until one day when Zandy's evil star seemed to culminate.

March, subdued at last, had given place to April, and the first days of warm spring sunshine were melting the snow. Already patches of the moist, steaming earth were visible, and the roads were so bad for foot and horse, that for several days Zandy and Grace had remained at school during the short noon intermission.

On this evil day Zandy had exasperated the teacher by wilful inattention, and by the cool indifference of manner with which she received his reproofs, and his attempts to spur her on to imitate Grace; and—an instance of the total depravity of inanimate, as well as animate, things—her inkstand had upset and poured its contents in a black stream down the front of her dress, and she was obliged to sit beside Grace in one or two recitations, and endure her deprecating regard of her untidy appearance.

When noon came, Grace and Zandy were left alone for a time;

but Zandy, having despatched her lunch, buried her attention in a story-book, and Grace amused herself by looking out of the window, until Mart Reynolds appeared. They fell into friendly discourse; for Grace had not even excepted Mart from her efforts to please, and her smiles and kind words were a novelty which he was not slow to make much of.

By-and-by Grace wandered to the black-board, and having quite a talent in that line, drew a picture of the teacher, which called forth a loud laugh from Mart, and a covert smile from Zandy.

"My eye," Mart said, "if that isn't first-rate! It's just the way old Marshall looks when he's hearing the recitations, with his book against his nose, and hair all on end."

"And his knock-knees, and big hands," said Grace, giving a touch here and there. "O, dear," she whispered, laying the chalk down softly, "somebody is coming!" and she and Mart disappeared at one door, as Mr. Marshall and two of the older boys appeared at the other.

They were busy on some point in one of the afternoon lessons; and the bell had rung and the scholars assembled, Grace and Mart coming in composedly with the rest, before Mr. Marshall discovered the drawing.

Smiles, and now and then an audible laugh, and the direction of many eyes to the board behind him, at length made him turn to see the cause of the merriment. He was a man of great self-control, whatever his faults may have been, and it was a tolerably calm face that he presented, after having deliberately contemplated the clever caricature.

The smiles gradually faded, as he coolly glanced along the rows of boys and girls. At length, breaking the perfect silence, he said: "Let the boy or girl who made that drawing stand up. I should like to know who it is that has so much talent for taking likenesses."

There was a general turning of heads, but no one arose.

"Let any one that *knows* who made the drawing, stand up!"

Again the turning of heads, but no one stood up.

"Genius is apt to be modest," said Mr. Marshall, after a pause; "but we must not let it hide itself in this case. Oliver Green and William Warner, will you have the goodness to step to the platform?"

The two boys who had come in with Mr. Marshall rose from their seats in wonder and some dismay, and came to the platform.

"Take the chalk, each of you, and write the name of the person, or persons who were in the school-room when you en-

tered it," said Mr. Marshall. "Don't delay," he added, as the boys looked at each other in consternation; "write at once."

William Warner slowly and reluctantly took the chalk, and began to write.

"In a larger hand than that," said Mr. Marshall; and the scholars presently saw in clear letters, "Alexandra Craighead."

Having written it, William turned his crimson face towards Oliver, and saw that he was standing with folded arms and a determined look, and had written nothing.

"Have you forgotten who was in the room when you entered?" asked Mr. Marshall.

"No, sir; but I won't write the name," answered Oliver.

"You won't?"

"No, *sir*; not if I know myself, and I think I do," replied Oliver.

"Then take your books and go home, and don't show your face in this school again," said Mr. Marshall, his face growing a shade or two paler.

Oliver went to his desk, and having gathered his books, walked to the door, and stopping only to make a sweeping bow to the school and Mr. Marshall, went out. No sooner had the door closed upon him than, as if by one impulse, there arose a deafening hurraing and stamping, that lasted nearly a minute, during which William Warner, having rubbed out the name he had written, slunk to his seat, followed by one or two hisses; and Mr. Marshall, feeling the worth of his boasted self-composure more than ever before in his life, waited calmly for silence; and when it fell it was profound.

"Alexandra Craighead, step to the platform."

Zandy rose slowly, and went to the desk with crimson cheeks.

"Is it true that you were in the school-room during intermission?" asked Mr. Marshall, when she stood before him.

"Yes, it is."

"Were you here through the entire recess?"

"Yes."

"Was any one with you?"

No answer.

"Do you know who made the drawing?"

No answer.

"It is clear that you *do* know something about it. And, supposing that you did not do it yourself—on the principle that the partaker is as bad as the thief, you shall have the pleasure of standing beside me here for the rest of the afternoon, that all may appreciate the fun of perpetrating such little pleasantries.

You may be moved to divulge what you know of the matter, too."

So there Zandy stood till every scholar was dismissed, with nothing to look at but the floor and the unsightly ink-stains on her dress, except that once she raised her indignant eyes to Grace; but the glance was lost upon her, for she was intent upon her book.

Dick could not study, and failed in his classes. The sight of Zandy in such dire disgrace was all he could take in for that day.

After school Zandy was granted an opportunity for confession, or disclosures, and apologies; but she had none to make, and so she was severely lectured and dismissed.

Reuben had come for them, and Grace and Dick were waiting; but Zandy coldly refused to ride with them—a freak that Dick could not in the least understand, and that somewhat chilled the warmth of his sympathy. But they went home, and by the time Zandy arrived, Dick was in an unusual tumult of contending emotions; for Grace, knowing well that the truth must come out, if in no other way, through Mart Reynolds, had confided the whole affair to Dick; and it required all her skill and sweetness to make her part in the afternoon's tragedy seem, even to him, anything but mean and cowardly.

They met Zandy at the door, and Grace began, amid tears: "Oh, Zandy dear, do forgive me. I was so frightened! I meant to tell to-day, but I couldn't make the words come, and I will confess it all to-morrow. I have told Dick—he knows how bad I was. Won't you forgive me?"

Zandy shook off the hand Grace laid on hers: "I never wish to speak to you, or look at you again. You can be friends with Mart Reynolds and Dick, but not with me. I despise you."

She broke away from them, leaving Grace crying, and Dick undergoing a revulsion of feeling in Grace's favor.

"Who is it that you despise?" asked Mr. Craighead, entering the hall at the moment. "What sort of language are you using, Alexandra?"

"I despise Grace," replied Zandy, "and I always shall," and she rushed up stairs to her own room, and nobody saw her again till the next morning, except her grandmother, who came to her after having heard a truthful, though of course a palliating, account of the afternoon's events. She blamed Grace for her want of courage, and felt the deepest sympathy for Zandy in her undeserved humiliation, and fully appreciated the heroism she had displayed in bearing it, rather than expose Grace. But she was inclined to judge Grace very leniently, because of

the untoward circumstances of her life, and the natural timidity of her nature.

"She has not your brave spirit, my dear, that makes it easier for you to bear blame than not to be perfectly truthful; and I really believe it seemed an impossibility for her to rise before the school and confess the wrong she had done."

"She didn't find it hard to recite her lessons, and look as if she never had done a thing that wasn't angelic," said Zandy. "And she dared to let me be punished in that horrible way for what she did herself. I don't call that being very timid."

"It is a kind of timidity that you cannot understand, my love, I know," her grandmother said, feeling in her heart very glad that she could not. "But do be just to her, dear. She says that she was trying all the afternoon to make the confession, but—"

"I don't believe a word of it," cried Zandy fiercely. "She was only trying to look as if she never heard of chalk and blackboards, and she didn't have to try for that very hard."

"While you so far forget yourself as to be rude to your grandmother, I cannot talk with you, Zandy," said Mrs. Craighead, rising to leave her; but Zandy threw her arms about her neck, and her bitterness found relief in tears and sobs.

CHAPTER X.

PLANS.

"THERE is nothing sweeter than a summer Sabbath like this," said Mrs. Craighead to her husband, as they stood together at the door, enjoying the quiet beauty of the morning. "It is as if, in spreading the blue sky above it, and filling it with sunshine, God hallowed it anew, and said, Remember to keep it holy."

"Yes, it is lovely," said Mr. Craighead; "but I am inclined to think that the peculiar serenity is in your own mind, my dear."

"I am sorry to say that it is not, this morning," replied his wife. "I feel anything but serene at the prospect of the parting this week."

"The house will seem deserted enough, won't it?" said her husband with a sigh.

"Yes, indeed. If Zandy were going too, I should be in despair."

"I am afraid you will find her far from being a comfort, Helen. She will miss Dick more than she imagines, and I shall be surprised if she does not make us sorry that she was left behind."

"I shall not feel sorry, dear, in any case, because I think it was best for her to stay; but I hope she will prove your fears to have been groundless. See how happy and sunny she looks now, dear child!" Mrs. Craighead added, as Zandy and Helen came down stairs together.

Helen and Royal had come to Oxley early in the summer, and their father and mother had been there for two or three weeks past, and a merry, noisy houseful had they made. But "all the good times were going away now," as Corrie dismally expressed it.

Plans for the young people had been discussed anxiously by the older ones, and it was decided that Zandy and Grace should go to New York, to enter school with Helen, and that Dick should go to prepare for college with Royal, who was to have Stephen Hollister, Henry's brother, for his tutor.

Grace and Dick were jubilant at the prospect, when it was

made known to them; but Zandy had taken the first opportunity to express her dissatisfaction to her grandmother.

"Don't send me away, grandmamma," she begged. "I know I've been horrid, and given you a great deal of trouble, but I will do better if you will only let me stay at home, and I know I shall grow worse and worse if I go to New York. I don't want to be in any school with Grace, and that is all about it."

Mrs. Craighead's chief misgiving had been on this very point—the continued, and seemingly inevitable friction between Zandy and Grace. They had been thrown less closely together during the summer, and there had been no outbreaks since the affair of the picture on the blackboard; but Mrs. Craighead's watchful eyes discovered the unlovely spirit of looks and tones, and saw a sad change in Zandy.

She had learned that Grace was not altogether guileless; that she was quite capable of little plots and manoeuvres to compass her own wishes; and she by no means considered her blameless in the unhappy relations existing between her and Zandy. But she always remembered the contrast in the influences that had surrounded the two girls, and pitied Grace more than she condemned her. And as Zandy's was much the stronger character of the two, she could not understand why she had not been the one to work changes—why she had not inspired Grace with her honest, brave spirit, instead of having all her own faults brought out into bold relief by Grace's weaker ones.

The misgiving made her quite ready to listen to Zandy's entreaties; and the more she thought of it, the more it seemed wise that Zandy should be separated for a time from both Dick and Grace; and though Mr. Craighead regarded it as yielding quite too much to her caprices, and said it would only foster the unamiable temper she had manifested for the past few months, Mrs. Craighead carried the day, and Zandy was to remain at home.

"You will miss Dick more than you dream," she said to Zandy, in their last talk about it. "You have never been away from him for more than a day in your life. You must not forget that."

"I don't mean to miss him," said Zandy. "He won't think of me as long as he has Grace, and I shan't think of him one bit more than I can help."

Dick was filled with secret wonder, mixed with some remorseful regrets, at the change in the plans. Corrie and Johnnie, whose devotion to Zandy had long ago returned with unabated fervor, in spite of an occasional want of gentleness in her treatment of them, were delighted. Royal and Helen were greatly disappointed, and a little vexed with Zandy for not being won

over by the good times they pictured. It would have suited them much better if Grace had been the one to stay behind.

Grace's vanity had been sorely wounded by the preference for Zandy, which her cousins took no pains to conceal. She could not be indifferent to it, for Royal was handsome and clever, and there was a quiet self-possession and independence in Helen's manner that rather overawed her; and Helen's truthfulness, together with her reticence towards those she did not love and trust, kept Grace at an uncomfortable distance. She always felt herself powerless, unless she could approach near enough to make her peculiar little arts and charms available; and though she knew she was much prettier than Helen, it never gave her the comfortable sense of superiority which she needed to put her quite at ease. Added to all the rest, Helen's having been out of health for the past year had made her the centre of the family devotion; and her opinions and wishes had no little weight, even with her father, who believed in the perfect subjection of children in general, and of his own in particular.

If Dick had wavered in his allegiance, Grace would have been in a sorry case indeed; but he did not, and now that Zandy was to be left in Oxley, and she was to have the field to herself in New York, she was quite happy, and looked forward to her little campaigns with flutters of excitement.

When the family were assembled at the breakfast-table that Sunday morning, Mrs. Craighead regarded them with loving eyes, and thought, as she often had before, that no woman ever had such reason to be proud and thankful.

"We will all go to church this morning," William Craighead said, "and gratify your vanity, mother, by letting the Oxleyans see us once more in the pride of our family beauty." And when they were gathered on the piazza, an hour or two later—all except Zandy—he offered his arm to his mother, saying, "We will take the lead. You, Louisa, can follow with father, and have a chance to admire us."

"Conceited man!" cried his wife. "It is well that you have mother on your arm, or you would be sent in disgrace to bring up the rear."

Dick, having shouted to Zandy that they were going without her, joined Helen and Grace, and the three followed their elders, discussing their respective claims to precedence.

Zandy was late because she suspected, from some little manœuvres her keen eyes had detected, that Grace intended to walk to church with Roy; and she had determined that she should, if Roy chose, and that it should be the final test as to which he liked best. Poor Zandy! her stormy heart had received its

first lesson in the ungenerous rivalries that make so much of the misery of life.

She watched till she saw all pass the gate except Roy, and then with a sad feeling of triumph—sad because unworthy, though she was happy in it—she joined him with a light step and cloudless face.

When the family returned from church they found Miss Flyte eating grass on the lawn, as composedly as if it were her especial privilege.

"How did she get there?" asked Mr. William Craighead.

"Why, she untied her halter, opened the stable door and the gate, and walked around," replied Zandy.

"Does she often cut up such capers?"

"She doesn't come on the lawn very often, she knows that is forbidden, but she does plenty of other bad things. Yesterday she got out of the stable and put her head in at the kitchen window, and ate up half Betsey's vegetables that she had got ready for dinner before Betsey saw her, and when she heard Betsey's voice scolding, she scampered back to the stable as fast as she could go."

"You had better have Roy catch her for you," said her uncle.

"He couldn't! he might chase her from here to Granby and back, and she would walk quietly into her stable as if she had never been out of it, before anybody could touch her."

"What a queer little beast!"

"She knows more than most humans do," said Zandy, going down the steps and up to Miss Flyte. "O Flytie!" she said, "to think of your doing such a thing, and Sunday too! I am ashamed of you."

Miss Flyte kicked her heels in the air, tossed her head saucily, and then rubbed her nose against Zandy's shoulder.

"None of your coaxing, naughty girl. I shan't give you any sugar—it would be rewarding your badness. Now stand still while I mount."

Zandy caught hold of the long white mane, and sprang lightly upon her pet's back, and astonished everybody by riding her up the steps, and through the hall out to the stable.

On Wednesday the New York Craigheads, with Grace and Dick, departed, leaving an aching void behind.

Mr. Chandler had sent word to his friends that in the latter part of that week he was coming to Oxley on special business. He should come in the morning, and take them back with him for the visit so long talked of, and so long delayed for various reasons. Friday he appeared, and, much to Carrie's surprise,

he inquired for her father, and when directed to his office, thither he went, with knit brows and a pre-occupied, hurried manner, most unlike his usual free, genial moods, only stopping to say that he had seen Mr. Boyd, and they were to start for Granby directly after dinner.

To Carrie's further surprise, her father came home in high spirits, with much to say in praise of his 'old friend Chandler;' and his roughly jovial treatment of herself seemed in some way connected with him, though how, she could not imagine. But the climax of wonders came after dinner, and after a rapid drive to Granby.

At a little distance from the village, they stopped before a pretty cottage.

"I never saw this place before," said Carrie. "Are we going in? Who lives here?"

"One thing at a time, Miss, if you please," returned Mr. Chandler, as he lifted her from the carriage. "We are going in—that is enough for now."

The cottage itself had a new look; but the trees were old enough, and there were roses and other flowers blooming in the little garden. A nice old lady stood in the door, smiling, and said, looking from Zandy to Carrie, and from Carrie to Zandy, as they followed Mr. Chandler, "Which is it, Thomas?"

"Which is what?" he asked, pretending to scowl at her. "This is Mr. Boyd, you know very well, for you've seen him before, and this is Zandy Craighead, and that is Carrie Reynolds. This is Sarah Chandler, girls, an aunt of mine, and a dear old soul, as you may see by her looks, which don't belie her. You must make friends with her, for you are likely to see a good deal of her in time to come."

The door looking across the river towards Pine Valley led into a room which seemed to Carrie the prettiest place she had ever seen. There were books—cases full—pictures, some of them familiar, having come from the den, and everything else that could help to make it attractive. At one end there was a piano, opened to show its lovely white keys, and the tones it gave forth, when Zandy touched them, were enchantingly sweet and rich.

In the bay-window, at the other end, stood a little table, combining conveniences for sewing and writing, with a chair belonging, that Zandy and Carrie pronounced the perfection of comfort.

"It is Miss Chandler's work-table and chair, I suppose," said Carrie.

"I don't suppose so," said Zandy. "It isn't for anybody a

quarter as old as she is. I have my 'demises,' as Sally Clark says"—and she nodded her head at Carrie in a very suggestive manner.

Mr. Chandler showed them through the house, and finally ushered them into one of the chambers, where everything was so dainty and bright, from the carpet to the pictures on the wall, and the roses in a glass on the bureau, that Zandy exclaimed, "Oh, how perfectly lovely! how sweet!"

"You think it is comfortable, do you?" asked Mr. Chandler—"think a girl might be contented with such a room, and not turn up her nose at it?"

"If she did, she ought never to have any room at all," cried Zandy. "But nobody could help thinking it lovely."

"Carrie doesn't think much of it," said Mr. Chandler, with a disappointed look at Carrie's sober face.

She had been very quiet since Zandy's speech about the work-table. But she exclaimed heartily, "Not think much of it? indeed, I think it is the sweetest room I ever saw."

When they were once more in the parlor, Mr. Chandler made them all sit down.

"Now," he said, "you have seen the whole thing, and you seem to approve my arrangements; you've seen the pantries and store-room and cellar, and may judge that I don't intend to let anybody starve that lives with me—I may say, either mentally or physically. And now in the presence of these witnesses, I claim you, Carrie Reynolds, for my daughter, the mistress of this little home, and its sunshine. That is your room up stairs; this is your place to study and read under my direction—if you don't know how to sew and knit, Sarah will teach you, *she* knows;—that is your piano, and you are to go to Oxley twice a week for lessons. You are to keep the house, and it is to be as truly your home, and you are to have every advantage that my means can procure, as much as if you were really my own child, as you will be legally, as soon as I can get the papers drawn up and signed. I have your father's consent—haven't I yours?" he asked suddenly, seeing that Carrie was trembling, and had covered her face with her hands.

"Carrie, Carrie!" cried Zandy, going to her impetuously. "What is it? Why are you not glad? How can you help feeling that it is the nicest thing that could be; such a pretty place, and dear, kind Mr. Chandler—"

"O don't, Zandy!" exclaimed Carrie in a choked voice. "I can't, I can't!"

"There, there, child," said Mr. Chandler, his own voice not a little unsteady; "don't fret yourself. I might have known

that a young thing like you couldn't be happy with an old fellow like me, and an old woman like Sarah."

"It isn't the young company that always makes girls happy, dear," said Miss Chandler, shaking her head over her knitting.

"Hush, Sarah; you don't know much more about girls and what makes them happy than I do," said Mr. Chandler.

"It is not that! you must not think it is that!" cried Carrie. "I *could* be happy. I want to come more than you can possibly imagine," and her tearful eyes wandered from the piano to the books and the bay-window, and rested gratefully upon Mr. Chandler's kind face. "But I am sure it would be wicked; mother never could do without me, and I think I am beginning to be of use to the children."

"Never mind the children," cried Zandy. "They are not worth so much."

"You owe something to yourself, Carrie, as well as to them," said Mr. Chandler gravely; "you must not sacrifice your whole life and all self-improvement to them."

"O dear! how shall I know what is right?" sighed Carrie, in painful uncertainty now. "Mr. Boyd, do tell me—what do *you* think I ought to say?"

"I think, Carrie," Mr. Boyd replied, "that it is a question which must not be decided hastily. When Mr. Chandler told me of his plan for you, I was a little doubtful whether you would feel that you could leave home, for I knew how entirely your mother depends upon you now, and how much you were beginning to hope as to your influence over the children. But your kind friend would not listen to my doubts, in his anxiety to have you relieved from care, and to give you the advantages we all know you deserve—"

"And his anxiety for his own happiness," interrupted Mr. Chandler.

"Now you must consider both sides of the question—the comfort it would be to Mr. Chandler to have you with him, and your duty to yourself, as well as your duty to those at home. Use your own good sense, and seek for a still safer guidance, and you will decide wisely and be happy in your decision."

So it was left that Carrie should have a week for considering Mr. Chandler's plan, and the visit came to an end rather soberly.

It was a trying week for Carrie. The struggle was gone through with and the victory won alone, as far as human help was concerned. Mr. Boyd felt that it was a question for her

own conscience, and would not let her appeal to him again; her father scouted the idea that she was needed at home, and was thoroughly angry with her for hesitating for one moment over such a remarkable chance to get a home and a fortune without marrying, which he assured her she was never likely to do with her plain face; her mother had sometimes no opinion to give, sometimes felt injured that anybody should think of taking away the only child she had who was old enough to be of any use, and again would petulantly urge Carrie's going, and wonder if she imagined that they couldn't live without her; and the children were one and all clamorous for the novelty of having Carrie gone, and having a sister to visit in Granby.

The victory was the more complete for being won against such odds; and Carrie's letter to Mr. Chandler, telling him that she could not accept his kindness, carried help and comfort to him in his great disappointment. Her compensation came in daily instalments—in new zest in her home-duties, and a deeper appreciation of them, and in the strengthening of her influence; and the slow, scarcely perceptible, but still real improvement in the tone of the family life. She had often occasion, too, to recall Mr. Boyd's assurance that she would be happy in her decision.

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CHAPTER XI.

THE HOLLISTERS AT HOME.

MR. HOLLISTER removed from Oxley to New York with brilliant expectations; and if he had lived a few years longer, they might have been fully realized. But he died suddenly, before the fair possibilities had come to be certainties; and when his affairs were finally settled, his family were obliged to leave their elegant home for a plain and inexpensive one, and to begin to practise an economy that was new to them, as even in Oxley Mr. Hollister had been very well off, and in New York his income was large. They had always spent money freely, though their tastes never led them to make any display.

Fortunately Mrs. Hollister possessed, with great gentleness and sweetness, a brave spirit; and so far from sinking, herself, into despondency beneath the weight of trouble, she inspired her children with courage and energy.

Bessie soon obtained an excellent position, through Mrs. William Craighead's influence, as teacher of the higher English branches in the young ladies' school which Helen attended. Henry, having just finished his college course, two years in advance of Stephen, entered Mr. Craighead's banking-house. Stephen helped himself by teaching, was graduated with high honors, and began the study of the law, still teaching and writing. He worked so hard, altogether, that his mother feared for his health; but he was impelled by ambitious hopes, and no difficulties daunted him.

Henry's wrong-doing and disgrace fell like a sudden blight upon the hearts of those whose welfare was so closely linked with his. Previous trials were as nothing in comparison. But after the first horror had passed, Mrs. Hollister was able to take comfort from the sincerity of her boy's repentance, and the conviction that his future life would prove it. She yearned to have him near her, where she could watch and warn and help him. Anything seemed easier, in that brief, agonized time between his arrest and the parting, than to let him cross the seas, and leave them between her and him. But his one thought was to earn money to pay his humiliating debt, and he would listen to no entreaties. So now she hoped and prayed for him in his

exile, and wrote letters full of faith in his power to stand and withstand; and Bessie shared her feelings, though of course in a less degree.

Stephen, while he pitied his brother, rebelled bitterly against the stain he had brought upon their hitherto spotless name. He never had felt that the family pride was touched by the change in their circumstances, for his father's honor had not been questioned. But in Henry's fall there seemed only unmixed disgrace; and he was never free from an undercurrent of fierce chafing, which manifested itself in a cold reserve of manner to those outside his home, and a studied indifference to people and their opinions.

A new and unexpected cause for anxiety and pain came in the long and unaccountable delay in hearing from the exile. Days dawned, after the time had passed when letters should have been received, bringing new hopes of an end to the painful suspense, and closed in new and keener disappointment, until they grew into weeks and months. Still no tidings came: at length the anxiety became too deep for words, and Henry's name was seldom mentioned, though he was never absent from his mother's thoughts.

The advent, a few months after Henry's departure, of Mrs. Frisby, an aunt of Mr. Hollister's, was not calculated to increase the cheerfulness of the little circle. Her husband had been kindly released from the tiresome discipline of a life with her a year or two before, and she had tried living with some of her nearer relatives, but found it impracticable, for reasons best known to herself and them. Apparently she had no misgivings as to her nephew's widow and children, or else she regarded them as a last resort. For she speedily followed the letter announcing her intention to spend the rest of her days under their roof; and a bedstead, bureau, rocking-chair, and trunks speedily followed her. It clearly never once occurred to her that her perpetual presence could be viewed as other than a blessing; and Mrs. Hollister would not have suggested the truth to her husband's elderly relative. She bore her long homilies and lectures, and her constant fault-finding, with great patience, did up her caps and laces for the sake of peace in the kitchen, and, as Bessie declared, "behaved like a lamb in the claws of a vulture."

"I should behave less like a lamb, my dear, if you and Stephen didn't show your naughty claws whenever she says anything you don't like," Mrs. Hollister replied once, when Bessie remonstrated with her for her meekness.

"I do really believe I could treat her like an angel for a

week, mamma," cried Bessie, "if I could see you give her what she deserves, just once."

So more than a year has passed, and now it is Christmas Eve—a year from the Christmas party in Oxley, and more than a year from the visits of Dick and Zandy to Henry in the tower, and from the sad parting, and Henry's sailing for China.

The room is small, but tasteful and pleasant, where Mrs. Hollister rests on the lounge from the fatigues of her Christmas arrangements, and where Bessie sits, putting the last stitches in a pair of slippers she had embroidered for Stephen. The only feature of the scene that is not wholly attractive, is Mrs. Frisby in her chair by the fire. She is not a large woman, so that it must be the aggressive sombreness of her face and air that makes it seem as if she takes more than her share of the space, and that she is sitting upon any attempt at cheerfulness, and will keep it down if possible. Mrs. Hollister's face is exceedingly refined. Bessie's is one that can evidently express a great many things, though just now her forehead is puckered, and the corners of her mouth drawn down, as is usual when she is intent upon anything. As she takes the last stitch, and holds up the slippers for inspection, her forehead smooths out and her lips relax into a comical smile.

"Don't you like them now, mamma?" she asks. "You know you do, and you may as well say so."

"I think the contrast of the colors is pretty, Bessie; but I can't see any beauty in those wicked-looking little black figures," her mother replied.

"They *are* rather impish," says Bessie, regarding her work with great satisfaction; "and on the bright scarlet ground they may be—well, just a bit suggestive. But I know Stephen will appreciate the beauty of their ugliness. What do you think about it, aunt?"

"Don't ask *me*, Elizabeth! you know I have nothing to say as to your goings and comings and doings. But if you wish to know my opinion, it is, that I don't wonder poor Henry went astray, if that's a pattern of the influence you exerted on him; and I advise you to look out that you don't set Stephen to walking in the same evil ways."

Bessie planted her elbows on the table, and fixed her eyes on her aunt, ready to give her a piece of her indignant mind; but a deprecating motion of her mother's hand, and a look at her pleading face, checked her. She knew very well that to notice her aunt's reference to Henry would only spur her on to say more that would pain her mother. So after a pause for self-control, she held up her slippers again.

"It is very disrespectful of you, mamma, not to like my monkeys. If I had made so many portraits of Adam and Moses, or *any* of our later progenitors, you would have thought it highly proper. You shouldn't scorn a seed because it isn't already a flower."

"What nonsense are you talking, Elizabeth!" exclaimed her aunt. "You and Stephen are enough to drive one distracted, with all your ridiculous notions. You'd do well to read Edwards and Watts, and other good books, instead of all this stuff about man's geology."

"I'll make a bargain with you, aunt," cried Bessie. "If you will read six novels, that I will recommend and guarantee to be first-class sensation ones, I will agree to read any six sermons that you shall specify, including that awful one that you regaled me with extracts from, when I was ill—the one about the sinner's being suspended over the bad place, like a spider. What do you say?"

"I haven't walked soberly and decently all these years, Elizabeth, to go frisking after novelties and folly now, you may depend."

"Well, I have done *my* duty, at least," said Bessie, shaking her head solemnly; "and not only your own edification, but mine as well, rests upon your shoulders. I do wish Stephen would come now. I am getting ravenous, after my walk from school."

"Why did you walk, Bessie dear?" asked her mother. "It was too far, and such a cold day, too."

"To save ten cents, mamma. I have spent so much on clothes and Christmas, that I am dreadfully hard up, and shall have to count every penny till next pay-day comes."

"I don't see how any person in *this* family can care for fine clothes now-a-days," said Mrs. Frisby.

"That black serge of yours, aunt, is as much like sackcloth as you need to wear, to express your deep humility, and the ashes fall from your lips whenever you speak; so I don't think you need feel condemned, if my black dress is cashmere, and my thrice made-over bonnet is velvet."

Mrs. Hollister had uttered a gentle remonstrance during Bessie's speech, and when it was finished, Mrs. Frisby said: "Never mind, Jane. I can bear it. I am used to impudence from your children. There's the clock a-striking seven! I will have my tea now. I don't propose to have my digestion spoilt, at this late day, by waiting for folks past all reason."

"You shall have your tea in three minutes, aunt," cried Bessie, "and perhaps you would like to go to bed after you

have drunk it? You know what Solomon says about 'early to bed and early to rise,' and about the 'early bird.'"

"Bessie! you know it wasn't Solomon," said her mother.

"Well, if he didn't say it, somebody did, and I want aunt to take the benefit of so much sound wisdom."

"All the Solomons in creation couldn't make me go to bed short of two hours after eating, Elizabeth; I know better than that what's good for digestion."

"Perhaps a quiet season with Isaac and Jonathan, then, would be more edifying than our frivolous conversation, and you could be saving up ashes for Christmas distribution, too."

"Bessie dear!" remonstrated Mrs. Hollister.

"There is your tea, aunt," said Bessie, presently.

"Is it strong? If it ain't, I'd as lief have dishwater."

"The proof of the tea is in the drinking, I fancy; you can soon tell by tasting it."

"Make me some toast, Elizabeth, and don't burn it; and bring me some oysters. I'll have mine to-night instead of to-morrow."

"Oh, aunt! how beautifully you *do* adapt yourself to our poverty. Your lessons are invaluable! It is like being in two schools of adversity at once, and being ferruled all the time. How fast we ought to learn to bear all things, under your tutelage."

"There is Stephen, Bessie," said her mother, rising from the sofa.

When Stephen came in, he met his mother's eager, questioning look with a little shake of the head and an extra kiss, but nothing was said. It had seemed to Mrs. Hollister that Christmas could not come without tidings from her absent son; but it had.

"I went to Mrs. Haslitt's for you, Bess," Stephen said, when they were seated at the tea-table. "I thought you might be detained later than usual, and might like my company home."

"Thank you for the kind attention all the same, dear, though I am nearly starved with waiting for my supper," said Bessie.

"We thought you were probably detained at Mr. Craighead's."

"So I was. Dick and Royal and the girls were going to have a 'Dickens representation,' as they call it, to-night, and asked me to stop and hear them rehearse; and as I suggested the thing, I felt some interest in seeing how they carried it through; and they really did admirably well."

"What was the scene from?" asked Bessie.

"From Nicholas Nickleby—the tea-party at Mr. Squeers's. Grace is Tilda Price; Helen is Fanny Squeers; Royal, John

Browdie, and Dick, Nicholas. Grace is a little too fine-ladylike for Tilda Price, but she is pretty and graceful, and coquettish enough to make up for any lack in the personation, and Helen makes a capital Fanny Squeers."

"I don't believe Grace could be induced to take any part that wouldn't show off her beauty."

"Do you think so?" returned Stephen. "I haven't seen much of her, but school-girls are invariably vain and silly, I believe. The only wonder is, that there are so many sensible women in the world."

"Stephen! What an ungracious sentiment!" cried his mother. "I am really ashamed of it."

"It is my misfortune, not my fault, mother, if I have never seen a girl who was not more or less self-conscious and foolish—except Bess; but she has always seemed more like a boy than a girl. Having been a book-worm from her cradle has saved her."

"Well, my dear," said Bessie, "of boys under twenty-five, my private opinion, thus publicly expressed, is, that they are conceited and rapid—thinking every girl in love with them that looks at them, unless they are clever, and devoted to books; in which case, they are cynical and bearish, or simple and bashful."

"To which class do I belong?" asked Stephen.

"The last, of course! And let me tell you, that you must add Helen Craighead to your list of one exception. She is as free from nonsense as I ever was, without being a worm. I should imagine Alexandria might be added too."

"She came to her uncle's yesterday," said Stephen. "I saw her to-night."

"Did you? Did her grandparents come with her?"

"No, she came with a friend of the family—a Mr. Boyd, I believe."

"O yes! the pastor of the Craigheads' church in Oxley. How does Alexandra look?"

"She is pretty—all the Craigheads have some claim to beauty. She is taller than Grace, and seems older."

"Grace affects childlike ways," said Bessie; "it is her rôle. How I do detest her little tricks and vanities and affectations."

"Whew!" cried her brother. "Who is severe now? I should have said she was a pretty child—an amiable, vain little beauty."

"She is anything but a child. If I should tell you how wily and unchildlike I think her, you would say I was unjust."

"You haven't known her long, dear; perhaps you *are* unjust."

"No, mamma, I don't think I am. Three months is not much, under some circumstances, but seeing Grace every day, you know—and then a number of little things happened at the outset, that gave me the key to her character."

"Can't you be of use to her, Bessie?" asked her mother. "She is too young not to be open to good influences."

"I thought I might help her at first. But she is shrewd, and soon saw that I understood her; and now she keeps away from me as much as possible. She is only friends with those who admire and pet her, and those with whom she desires, for special reasons, to stand well. She is really even-tempered, and I can readily imagine her seeming angelic to those who don't interfere with her little plots in any way."

"What a pleasant study you open before us, Bess!" said Stephen. "You make me eager to try my rare powers of discrimination on this pretty human riddle."

"I would like to propound this problem to any young man who is to fall in Grace's way, when she is a trifle older. Given: a perfect face and form, graceful, winning manners, faultless speech, and a heart full of deceit, plottings and guile; what is likely to be the result?"

"You would say a broken heart," suggested Stephen.

"Something worse than that," returned Bessie; "faith in womankind, and all that is true and good, destroyed, and a soul set adrift on a sea of bitterness and unbelief."

"What a dismal prophecy, Bessie," said her mother. "Stephen, tell me more about Alexandra."

"I know nothing to tell, mother. I only saw her a moment. Her face interested me. She has sunny eyelashes like her hair, that give her eyes a sunny expression, and yet I am sure they can be cloudy and tempestuous. She is Dick's twin sister, it seems."

"Yes, and I have heard Grace rave, at school, about Dick, and about 'Zandy's' being so frightfully jealous of his devotion to her."

"What a dish of gossip you have served up to us, Bess," said Stephen, as they left the table.

"I think you have put in a few of the spices," said Bessie.

"It passes me, Jane," said Mrs. Frisby, "how you can sit calmly, and hear your children backbite their fellow-beings so shamefully. My ears ache with the scandal they have heard this night."

"It is a curious fact," said Bessie, "that your horror didn't culminate until you had heard the very last word."

"And all that talk about theatre-playing! You could even

countenance that, Jane! What would their pious father and uncle say, if they could know of their tendencies?"

"Really, aunt, there is a difference," said Mrs. Hollister. "You know I disapprove of theatres and real plays; but I can see no harm in these little home diversions. They seem to me as innocent as reading the stories themselves."

"That is saying precious little for 'em," replied Mrs. Frisby. "But it is no use for me to talk. I have learned *that*, so I will bid you all a very good night, and try to fix my mind on better things."

"Good night, Aunt Frisby, and do pray that we may be delivered from this gall of bitterness and these bonds of propinquity," said Bessie, as her aunt left the room in solemn state.

"Bessie, I cannot let you say such things," said Mrs. Hollister. "It really pains me to have you so disrespectful to your father's aunt, and to have you quote the Bible so lightly."

"I am sorry to pain you, mother, dear," replied Bessie, "and for your sake I do try to be good to her; but I cannot help answering some of her impertinent, pharisaical speeches."

"By the way, here is a note from Mrs. Craighead," said Stephen, who was looking over some papers and letters.

"How long have you had it?" asked Mrs. Hollister, as she opened the note and looked at the date.

"Only three or four days, mother! Why, would you have gone, if you had received it in time?"

"No, but I should like to have declined the invitation civilly. Bessie, it is to ask us there to spend this evening, to see the children's play and the Christmas tree."

"How shabby, Stephen!" cried Bessie; "you are really losing your manners."

"I *am* ashamed, my dears—I confess my sins; but this question arises in my mind: how far is a person to blame for not doing a thing that he forgets to do? How can he *help* forgetting, and how can he do it if he *does* forget? That note never entered my head—or the receipt of it, rather—from the time Royal delivered it to me until to-night, as I was coming away, when Mrs. Craighead asked me if she should have the pleasure of seeing us all there this evening. Her look of polite amazement, when I stammered out that I had forgotten to deliver the note, made me realize the enormity of what I had done."

"It was very kind of her to invite us, when we had declined so many invitations; and I really wish, if she ever asks us again, that you and Bessie would go."

"Not I, mother," said Stephen; "I have done with society."

Bessie laughed: "Hear him! He has hardly worn out his first pair of top-boots, and talks about having done with society!"

"You and Aunt Frisby are the oldest dames I know, Bess. No wonder you look down upon young people like mother and me. But I must leave you, and read some law to-night, if it is Christmas-Eve."

"Listen to me a minute," cried Bessie, catching her brother's hand as he passed. "You will please bear in mind that you are to pay me some attention this vacation. Daily walks I insist upon, and you are to read at least one book with me."

"Very well, so be it!"

CHAPTER XII.

SHADOWS.

HELEN CRAIGHEAD was unable to return to school after the holidays. The doctor assured her mother that the greatest care was needed: that she must not study at home, even, and must only go out in pleasant weather; while it was equally necessary that her mind should be kept occupied and diverted. He saw no reason why she might not be quite well in time, if the right course were pursued, and health were made the first consideration.

"Then Zandy must stay with me, mamma; I will be very good and patient if you will let me keep her," Helen said, when the doctor's verdict was made known to her.

"I will write to your grandparents about it, dear," her mother replied. "I should be delighted to have Zandy stay, but I am afraid they cannot spare her."

"They have Corrie and Johnny," said Helen; "they were going to let her come to attend school. I shall write to them, mamma, and tell them how very much I need Zandy, and I know they will be good and say yes."

"Very well, dear; write your letter, and I will write mine, and perhaps we may prevail. But how about Zandy herself? Are you sure she would like it?"

"I spoke of her staying to go to school with Grace and me, and she only said she couldn't. But I know she won't refuse, when she finds how dull I should be without her."

"The most serious objection I see is her losing so much time in her studies.—She might have a private teacher."

"Mamma!" exclaimed Helen, "I know the very nicest thing! Let her study with Dick and Royal."

"She is not far enough advanced, is she?"

"She is in some things. We were talking about it this morning, and she has been studying very hard this term. I think she was determined not to let Dick and Grace get ahead of her."

"Well, that doesn't matter much, anyway, dear. Your plan for her having lessons with Mr. Hollister is a very good one, even if she has to recite by herself. I will talk it over with

papa, and it can all be nicely arranged, if grandpa and grandma consent."

Helen was a little disappointed to find how coldly Zandy listened to the plans that seemed so charming to her. She only said, "Yes, I think it would be very nice—I should like to be with you."

"Do you think you would be homesick?" asked Helen, wondering what had come over Zandy, that she could be so indifferent, when she was usually so heartily for or against things.

"No, I don't think I should, though I should want to see them all."

"Of course nobody could make up for grandpa and grandma; but I think Dick and Royal and I might do instead of Corrie and Johnny."

"If Dick wasn't here I should like to stay," exclaimed Zandy, becoming as vehement as she had been indifferent.

"Why, Zandy, what do you mean?" cried Helen, in amazement.

She had seen that Zandy and Dick were not as good friends as they used to be; but they had never spoken of it, and Zandy's sudden outburst took her altogether by surprise.

"I mean just what I say," replied Zandy; "that if Dick and Grace were somewhere else, I should like to stay with you."

"Zandy! I know what the trouble is; but are you going to give Dick up, and wish to be away from him, instead of trying to get him back?"

"I couldn't if I did try," said Zandy. "Grace has made him think she is an angel, and I am horrid, and he never will think anything else; and I never shall get over his giving me up for Grace in a week. So I only want to be where I needn't see their goings on."

"If a girl like Grace should make friends with Roy," said Helen, "I should, I am quite sure, think how bad it was for him to give up his sister for her, and I should try my best to be so good to him that he couldn't help loving me more than ever."

"It is easy for you to say so, Helen, when you don't know anything about it. I don't suppose you ever *could* be as bad as I am; but you would see how hard it is to bear, if it were Roy instead of Dick."

"I know I cannot imagine much how I should feel," said Helen gently, though the color had come to her pale cheeks at Zandy's excited tones. "But I can't bear to think of your letting it get worse and worse, as it will, unless it gets better. I can't tell how, exactly, but I feel sure that it is bad for Dick to be so de-

voted to Grace instead of to you and of course it is bad for you to be wrought up all the time."

"Well, I don't see what is to be done," said Zandy. "I can't do anything. Grace is always with Dick. I never can see him alone, even if I wanted to, which I do not."

"Oh, Zandy! You will be sorry some day, if you let yourself cherish these feelings. Do just try being as you used to be with Dick. Ask him to go somewhere with you, and I will have mamma keep Grace at home. Where are they now?"

"Gone down town. Grace told me in her cattish way that she had got to go down Broadway, and that Dick would insist upon going with her, though she begged him not, because she knew we wanted to be together; but they would only be gone a little while. I am sure she was meant for a cat, with her soft purring and sharp claws."

"Well, I am more determined than ever, now, to have you stay. Mrs. Haslitt wanted mamma to let us board there this term, and I don't know whether she had made up her mind to have us or not; but I will get her to let Grace, and then we four will have just the nicest times that ever were, and you will get Dick back again. You needn't shake your head, for I know you will if you are sweet and good, as you must be."

"When they came home from the sleigh-ride this morning," said Zandy, "I was playing for Mr. Boyd, and I didn't hear them come in, or I should have stopped, for I didn't mean to have Grace hear me play; and when I finished, Grace clapped her hands, and said how lovely, and how I had improved, and all I needed now was style! Dick looked at her as if he expected to see wings growing. Oh, she is so aggravating!"

"I think she is, too, if you notice her little ways, but I always think it isn't worth getting vexed at, and try to feel sorry for her: for she is really very forlorn, with no near friends except us; and as grandmamma says, everything has been against her. Sometimes I think she doesn't know how to be sincere."

"Everybody makes excuses for her," cried Zandy, "and I don't know but I should myself, if she only had not pounced upon Dick and gobbled him up so; I could forgive all her other meanness to me."

"You will have to forgive that too, Zandy, before things will go right."

Mrs. Craighead and Helen sent their letters to Oxley, and in a few days answers came, consenting to Zandy's remaining in New York for Helen's sake. So Mr. Boyd went home without her, and in the course of a week or two the plans for her lessons were arranged, and she had begun them in earnest. Mr. Hol-

lister found her a very bright, apt pupil, ready to master any difficulty, but by no means invariably amiable. Whether he observed it or not, it was a fact, that her most perverse, unreasonable days were those following Grace's visits; though she *always* felt that she had excellent cause for discontent, as she took it for granted that whenever Dick was out of the house, it had something directly or remotely to do with Grace, and tormented herself accordingly. Her suspicions grew partly out of an unfortunate little chance: Soon after Grace went to Mrs. Haslitt's to board, the incautious Dick left a note he had received from her lying on the sofa where he had read it; and while, if Zandy could have opened it, she would have found it quite insignificant, the sight of it was confirmation strong, to her jealous mind, that there was to be a regular and frequent correspondence.

There really was no doubt of Dick's satisfaction when Grace was at home for little visits, as he never troubled himself to conceal it, or to think whether Zandy cared. He knew that she heartily disliked Grace, and that she was cool and often cross to him, and never would go anywhere with him if she could help it, and he thought it very unreasonable, so far as he thought of it at all. He would gladly have been good friends with Zandy, for she could be so nice when she chose. But she did not choose, as she said to herself, to be taken up and dropped at Dick's or anybody's pleasure.

So Helen looked in vain for signs of the complete reconciliation that she had hoped for, though she saw outward peace, and could only guess at Zandy's state of mind; as, anxiously and often warned by Mrs. Craighead, everybody made a point of taking only what was sunshiny into Helen's presence.

From Christmas till May there was no perceptible improvement in the invalid's health; and while the possibility of her never being well again was not breathed, or even admitted in their secret hearts, her father and mother watched the growing sweetness in her pale face, and the growing loveliness of her character, with an unacknowledged pain, looking eagerly for the coming of summer, promising themselves that strength would come with the warm days.

Zandy studied in Helen's room, and was with her as much as her aunt thought was for the good of both; and in that peaceful place the tumult of unworthy feelings was really hushed, in a degree. Sometimes the sinfulness of the spirit she was cherishing grew so vivid in the light of Helen's gentleness and patience, that she would make the heartiest resolves to overcome it; but she found it far easier to resolve, than to put out of her heart

the resentment and jealousy she had allowed to reign there so long; and Helen could only pray for her, and believe, in the fast maturing faith of her young heart, that some time her darling Zandy would learn how sweet it was to forget self, and forgive wrongs, and live for the good of others—she who had so much to do with: health, beauty, talents, and such a true, warm heart.

One afternoon Zandy came into Helen's room, bringing a letter from Carrie Reynolds, and asked Helen if she wouldn't like to hear it.

"Yes, indeed, of course I should. Carrie is such a dear girl."

"This letter is just like her," said Zandy; and she seated herself on a hassock beside Helen's couch, and read:—

MY DEAR ZANDY:—I can't tell you half how badly I feel about your staying away so long, or how much I miss you, and shall till you get home. I went to your grandfather's the day after the one set for you and Mr. Boyd to come back, expecting to see you, and hear all about your visit; and instead, Corrie came running out to meet me, and said that you weren't coming home at all, you were going to stay *all the time*, which meant all winter. I could have sat right down in the snow and cried with all my might, and I don't know but I should, if your grandma hadn't called me in, and told me how ill poor dear Helen was, and how much she needed you. So I had to be glad for her sake, for I know how hard it is to be ill, and how nice it is to have you by when one is. It was so good of you to write to me and ask me to write to you, when you have so much that is new to do and think about, and when you know what stupid, humdrum things happen to me, and what dull letters I must write. Ma hasn't been as well lately; she is very nervous, and cannot bear the least noise, and I have great times keeping the children quiet. Oh, Zandy! you used to think I was busy, but I don't know what you would think now, since I have begun to study regularly, but I believe people have time to do all they *ought* to do, and I think my lessons and reading are as much a duty as taking care of mother and the children, and making things comfortable at home. It is odd to see how things come to one—how seeing one thing helps one to see another. A year ago I didn't think I had any duties, and never dreamed that I could be of use to anybody, and seeing that I had solemn duties right before me in my home seemed to open my eyes to see that I ought to improve my mind, and I found I had time for that, too, when I thought I hadn't a minute for anything. It all comes of having such friends as Mr. Boyd and Mr. Chandler and your grandma. If it hadn't been for them, I should have kept on in that stupid, useless way; and

above all it comes of having a patient, kind Father in heaven, who gives the friends, and eyes to be opened, and chances to use them when they are opened.

I do wonder, Zandy dear, if you will be tired to death of this long letter? But one thing more I *must* tell you, that Mr. Boyd and I took tea at your grandma's last night, and had the loveliest time—no, not the *loveliest*, for it would have been lovelier if you had been there, but it was *very* pleasant. We talked a great deal about you and Dick, and wished we could see you, but were glad you were being a comfort to dear Helen. You know how Corrie always climbs on your grandpa's knee, after tea, if there's nothing special going on? Well, last night she sat there as quiet as a kitten, till Rachel came to take her to bed, and then she burst out crying, and said, "Oh, I do want to see Zandy *so!* I can't have her gone so dreadful long. Grandma, you must send for her to come home the very first to-morrow." Johnny laughed at her a little at first, but ended by crying himself, and your grandpa wiped his eyes, and I shouldn't wonder if your grandma cried too, for she went up stairs with the children. I shan't tell you how many times I have cried because I wanted to see Zandy *so*. Give my love to Helen, and tell her I hope she will soon be as well as I am; she needn't wish to be any "weller," as Corrie says.

If you count every word in this letter for a pound of love, you won't know how much there is in it for you, from

Your friend,

CARRIE.

"Isn't it a good letter?" asked Zandy.

"Very; it is just like Carrie; you can almost hear her say it all. How happy she must be!"

"Must be!" exclaimed Zandy. "How funny, Helen. She is happy, I know; but it is a perfect mystery to me that she can be. I should be perfectly wretched, to live as she does—so tied up at home with such a father and mother, and such a crowd of disagreeable brothers and sisters."

"They are not disagreeable to her, I suppose, and she can do so much for them. I don't think anybody can be really happy that hasn't something to do, and some people seem to have so much trouble to find their work, even if they want to; and Carrie has hers "right before her," as she says, and has the heart to do it, and does it well; so I think she must be happy."

"I don't see how it is that you and Carrie are so much wiser and better than I am," said Zandy. "Carrie isn't so very much older than I am, and you are younger—"

"All of five months!"

"Well, that's something—and you see things so differently, just as grandma and Mr. Boyd and all the good people do. I do believe my soul is made of different stuff. Now it seems to me the queerest thing that you should think it nice to have a dreadful burden on one's hands, like Carrie's, and call it a duty, instead of having nothing to do but enjoying one's self—study and read and practise for work, and go into society when the time comes, and travel, and be a belle, and get married. That is all I ever expect to do."

"No, it isn't all you are to do; you will find something a great deal better."

"No—I mean to do good when I have money to give away, but unless all my poor people are like Sally Clark, I shall want to have an agent to send it by."

"Do you know what I am going to will to you, Zandy?" said Helen, laying her hand on her cousin's shoulder, and looking into her eyes with a sad little smile—"if I don't get well?"

Zandy caught her breath, and a great fear filled her heart and made it almost stand still for an instant, for this was the first time the vague dread she had felt, when the doctor came oftener than usual, or her aunt looked specially anxious, had been shaped into words; and only a quick intuition that she ought not to excite Helen kept her tolerably calm, and made her answer: "I may have the will to do myself—who knows? though I have nothing you would care for, unless it is the locket with papa and mamma in it, and the turquoise ring Dick gave me so long ago."

"I mean you to have my amber necklace and pin that you like so much. But besides that there is something I want to will to you; will you promise to take good care of it?"

"I tell you, Helen, that I am not going to let you have a chance to will me things," cried Zandy, choking back the tears that the pain at her heart forced to her eyes; "but I will promise all the same," she added, seeing that Helen looked disappointed; "it won't make any difference."

"Well, I want to bequeath to you, dear, all the good that I might have done; I don't mean the money part, but the good that is done in other ways; for mamma and papa, and Royal and Dick—I think I might have helped Dick a little—and for Grace, too, Zandy, and Mr. Hollister—oh, Zandy, I see so plainly now that we can do something for everybody we meet, and some that we don't; and I should like to feel, if I am not to get well, that you will try to do what I leave undone. Will you, darling?"

"What! sitting here in the dark, my dears?" said Mrs.

Craighead's cheerful voice, as she entered the room, scrutinizing the girls' faces as she spoke.

"In the firelight, mamma," replied Helen. "Zandy, where are you going?" but Zandy had no voice to answer with, and ran on to her own room, where she could relieve the pain she felt in a fit of crying, calling herself silly all the time; "as if Helen's not thinking she was going to get well made it any less certain that she would."

April and May were unusually warm and pleasant, and Helen seemed really to gain strength with each sunny day; and the second of June was her birthday.

"Mamma," she said the evening before, "we must do something to celebrate to-morrow—think of my being sixteen years old! and I will tell you what I have thought of."

"Do, dear, and then I will tell you what I had thought of, if you only had been well a little sooner."

"Well, you know I have only had short drives yet, and now I feel well enough to take a long one; so I want papa to take us all to the Park for a pic-nic—to row on the Lake and walk in the Ramble, and do whatever I take a fancy to when we are there."

"A very modest celebration that will be, darling; but if you think you would like it as well as anything we could do on such short notice, it shall be arranged. But just listen, dear, to *my* grand plan, if you had but taken a fancy to get well a month sooner: to have been at grandpa's a fortnight ago, and had a *fête champêtre!* the grounds lighted up, gayly bedight boats on the lake, dancing on the lawn and piazzas!"

"That would have been lovely, mamma; thank you for the thought. But as we can't have that, I would like to see the Park; a look at the green grass and trees will do me good. I wish we were at grandpa's now."

"So do I, darling, and we are only waiting for the doctor to say you are well enough to travel."

"Yes, mamma, and I didn't mean to complain, though it sounded so, didn't it? Oh, I forgot to say that I want Mr. Hollister to go to-morrow; tell him so from me; and Zandy and Dick and Royal, and you and papa."

Zandy entered most heartily into Helen's pleasure at the prospect of the "pic-nic," and she had a secret satisfaction of her own, which was, that not a word was said about Grace; and as it was not monthly holiday, it seemed natural that her going should not be thought of.

The balmy spring days, and the happiness of Helen's recovery, had so far thawed Zandy's coldness towards Dick, that Helen

thought it was all coming right; and Dick was glad, without thinking very much about it, for it really was nice to have Zandy so merry. He wondered sometimes if she were not going to be friendly with Grace, too. There were no special signs of it as yet.

Having Dick to herself, that is, without Grace, was the feature of the pic-nic that charmed Zandy most, and she flew about all the morning in the gayest spirits, waiting upon Helen, singing and "chattering like a magpie," as her uncle said; and once, when she passed Dick in the hall, she astonished him by throwing her arms about his neck and kissing him, after her old impulsive fashion.

Her gayety was suddenly chilled, when, as she came flying down stairs to join Helen and Mr. Hollister in the drawing-room, she saw Grace standing with Dick on the door-step, and heard Dick say, "We must be sure to go in the same carriage, Gracie."

She paid no attention to Grace's greeting, but went into the drawing-room: "Is Grace going, Helen?" she asked.

"Yes, dear," replied Helen in a low tone. "It seems mamma sent Dick for her, or told him he might go. And it *would* have been too bad for her to be left out."

"Very well! I shall not go," exclaimed Zandy, brushing past Dick and Grace, who now stood in the hall, and running up stairs.

Grace and Dick looked at each other; Helen sat still in mute distress; Mr. Hollister walked away examining pictures at the other end of the room, and a moment after, the carriages drove up, and Mr. and Mrs. Craighead and Royal appeared.

"Well, are you all here, and all ready?" cried Mr. Craighead. "Where is Zandy? I thought she was with you, Helen."

"She went up stairs, papa."

"Run up, Dick, and tell her we are waiting for her."

Dick hesitated, and Mr. Craighead went to the stairs and called: "Zandy! come! aren't you through prinking yet?"

"I am not going, uncle," answered Zandy from the distance.

"Not going!" echoed several voices.

"What nonsense, Zandy!" cried Royal. "Come down this minute."

"We shall go without you in a minute more!" said her uncle.

"I am really not going, uncle," replied Zandy.

"What does this mean?" asked Mr. Craighead.

"I don't know indeed," replied his wife. "Have you any idea what has come over Alexandra, Dick?"

"Yes, I have," answered Dick, too angry with Zandy to think of sparing her. "It's because Grace is going, and nothing else."

"I don't believe it, Dick!" cried Royal. "I'll go and see."

"Stop! let me manage this," said Mr. Craighead. "Alexandra, come down at once. I wish to speak to you a moment."

"Let me stay at home, aunty," said Grace, with tears in her eyes.

"Papa," began Helen; but Mrs. Craighead checked them both—"Let papa do as he thinks best."

Zandy came slowly down the stairs with her hat and gloves off. Her cheeks were crimson, but her eyes met her uncle's with a defiant sparkle in them, and Helen felt there was no hope of her yielding.

"I wish to know, Alexandra, why, at this late hour, you propose to stay behind? What sudden freak leads you to behave in this disagreeable manner?"

"I don't care to go, and I don't know why I should feel obliged to, if I prefer to stay at home."

"Neither do I, and I don't think any one could wish to have you go, after such an exhibition of selfishness and temper; but we should like to have you give a reason, if you have one, for this change in your plans."

A little toss of her head was Zandy's only answer, except a quick glance at Grace and Dick; and her uncle demanded sternly, "Is it true that Grace's going is your reason for refusing to go?"

"Yes, it is. I would rather never go anywhere than to go with her," Zandy replied.

"Then stay at home, by all means," exclaimed Mr. Craighead. "Most extraordinary conduct! I advise you to spend the day in thinking of the propriety of a girl of your age allowing herself to be governed by the whims and freaks of a fiery temper. Louisa—Mr. Hollister—don't let us waste any more time. Come, Helen."

But Helen waited to kiss Zandy, and as she did so she whispered, "Zandy, how could you? You have spoiled my birth-day."

The last look Zandy caught was Mr. Hollister's—one of un-mixed contempt, it seemed to her; and she knew that her aunt and Royal were thoroughly incensed at her behavior, for neither noticed her as they went out. But almost her only thoughts through that long, desolate day, were of Helen; and the words, "You have spoiled my birthday," rang in her ears continually. There seemed nothing she would not gladly do, even to asking Grace's forgiveness, and promising never to think another un-kind thought of her, if she could but have lived the morning over, and saved Helen the pain she had inflicted.

Her aunt and uncle were too fond of her not to take her back into favor, when, at night, she made her humble and tearful acknowledgments, especially with Helen to plead for her; and Helen assured her over and over that she did not mind it any more, and that she loved her as dearly as ever. But she felt that she never could forgive herself; and that the estrangement between her and Dick was widened, was a secondary grief to her having spoiled Helen's birthday.

CHAPTER XIII.

STRANGER THAN FICTION.

THE ship in which Henry Hollister sailed for China met with storms and adverse winds, and when she should have been at her destination, had hardly made more than half the voyage. That accounted, in part, for the weary delay in the arrival of any tidings from Henry, that gave his friends such painful anxiety and apprehension. It was further due to a strange chance, if that can be called a chance which bears possibilities of pain and joy.

The unexpected length of the voyage had so reduced the ship's stores that to replenish them became imperative, and the captain looked anxiously for a certain island where he had touched in some former trip, and been warmly welcomed, and supplied with whatever the island afforded; and at last, in the clear light of a cloudless morning, its rocky peaks came into view, to the great relief of captain and crew, and to Henry's intense delight.

The journey would have seemed endless to Henry if it had been only of the ordinary length, and had no more than ordinary discomforts and trials. His own thoughts were the very last companions he desired, and to be at work, earning his release from that humiliating indebtedness, seemed to him the sole means of relief from the galling sting of his self-consciousness. But those tedious months of imprisonment and inaction, when to save the ship was all that was aimed at, and to make any headway against such winds and waves was impossible for days together, had been simply unendurable. Each day, measured by the mental and physical miseries it brought, would have counted for a week; and at times his impatience and torturing restlessness reached a point bordering very nearly on insanity. Then he would storm and rave, and curse his fate, and threaten violence unless impossible things were done; and was only saved from taking his own life by a gentle, but powerful influence—his love for his mother, and his dread of making her suffer more than he had already done. These wild frenzies of nervous excitement had their natural reaction, and after they were past he would lie for days in his berth, in a sort of stupor, and come forth in a state of calm stoical despair.

The captain declared to him that he was the most troublesome passenger he ever had—that a woman couldn't have behaved worse; and would sometimes threaten, if he had another "tantrum," to put him in the hold, and keep him there till they got to China.

Since the storms had ceased, and they had been looking for the island, his spirits had revived, and he had felt that all he needed to enable him to endure the rest of the voyage patiently was to stand, for ever so brief a time, on the blessed land, and see some human being besides the men who had shared his imprisonment in that tempest-tossed ship. It would be like a sure promise of better things to come—of quiet seas, favoring winds, and a chance to work.

He watched with eagerness the nearer and nearer approach of the rocky pinnacles, and the slow defining of outlines, wondering that so small a space could contain and support human life, and that its inhabitants could have anything to spare for others.

When the green drapery of the lower points were discernible, and trees and houses and smaller objects could be distinguished, the anchor was dropped, and signals given, and answering signals received, and Henry only waited to see the boats lowered, to claim the captain's promise that he should go ashore.

He regarded curiously and admiringly the brave bit of land that dared to lift its head in the midst of those mighty waters, and smile as serenely in vines and grass and flowers, as if safely nestled in the heart of its mother-earth, among its sister hills and valleys.

"Can't we get any nearer than this?" he asked of the captain, who joined him after a time.

"Easy; but we should stand a good chance of going to the bottom besides, which wouldn't be so pleasant."

"It looks as if it might be safe to go a good deal nearer—safer than for small boats to go through that surf."

"Looks are deceitful. The underpinning of that impudent little affair stretches 'way out to within half a mile of us. We'd be pretty sure to see Davy Jones in short order now, if a Nor'easter should blow up."

"There isn't much danger of that, I imagine," said Henry, casting his eyes over the calm sea and cloudless sky.

"Ain't, hey! There's going to be *something* nasty in the weather line before many hours," replied the captain, with anything but an admiring look at the same. "This has been the confoundedest voyage I ever made; and if I thought the rest of it was to be what it's been so far, I'd just take possession of

this here, or some other yam-patch in the President's name, chop up the *Fleetwood* into firewood, and China might go to bungy while I went to grass."

"The present occupants of this yam-patch would have to migrate to make room for us, I should think," said Henry.

"It's bigger than it looks, and the people are the best-natured folks in the world. I wouldn't ask for any better to live with, and there ain't many of 'em, either; only twenty or so; the rest went off to some other island—fact they all went, but these got homesick and came back."

"Yes, so you told me. If I desired to give a good illustration of the statement that truth is stranger than fiction, I would tell the story of these islanders. But what are you waiting for now? why don't you send the boats ashore?"

"We ain't going to send any boats ashore, man-alive! Do you suppose I'd put anything through that surf, if I could get what I wanted without? They'll come to us fast enough. Take a look at 'em, and you'll see."

Henry took the glass, and saw that two boats were making ready on the low rocky ledge, that served as a beach, and that men and women, more or less heavily laden, were hurrying down to them; and it was evident that the island was alive with excitement.

"I'd give a dollar to set my teeth into one of those bananas or oranges this minute," said the captain. "I could eat raw yams, and cocoa-nuts, shells and all, I'm so desperately hungry for something besides salt pork and mouldy hard-tack. I don't know how you, a land-lubber, must feel about it."

"I would give a great many more dollars to bridge this watery space, and feel the steadfast ground beneath my feet," replied Henry, still watching the operations on the island with impatient interest. "And I would be willing to live on salt pork and hard-tack a month longer, if that time would take us to Hong Kong."

"A month won't do it—you may depend on that," said the captain; "and if you can't make up your mind to take things easier than you have so far, you'd just better settle here with these good folks, and be done with it."

"You have my consent and blessing to carrying out your worst threats if I behave like a madman again," replied Henry, the hot blood rushing painfully to his face at this rough, though good-natured, reminder of his shortcomings in endurance and fortitude.

"Never mind! you'll do, after all!" cried the captain, giving him a reassuring slap on the shoulder, and leaving him.

Henry held his breath, when the boats were ready to push off, with their loads of the island productions, almost expecting to see them swallowed up in the heavy surf that beat upon the rocks. But the men skilfully took advantage of a receding breaker, and were quickly beyond the swell; and the ease and rapidity with which they rowed to the ship seemed something superhuman.

A noisy scene followed the arrival of the islanders, and the landing of the provisions they had brought. They were English subjects, and not so remote in their ancestry and connection with the mother-country as to lack an eager curiosity with regard to what had happened, in the unusually long interval since any vessel had touched at the island; and though they were men in stature and strength, and in native intelligence, yet they were like children in their simple-hearted frankness, and their questionings, and artless scrutiny of whatever they saw. Henry watched them, and listened with keen interest, and gained a new motive for visiting the island, in his desire to see how they lived—what sort of homes they had in their rocky, sea-girt isolation.

The men had a strange story to tell, which they told in their simple fashion:—

Many months before, a whaling-ship had stopped at the island, and committed to their care two half-starved, half-crazed, emaciated women. They had been picked up from a life-boat, the only survivors among six or eight unfortunates who had taken refuge in it, evidently from some wreck. Their condition was so distressing, and their recovery seemed so impossible, that the captain of the whaler had felt it to be the most merciful thing he could do, to take the poor creatures where he knew they would have every care and kindness while they lived, and Christian burial when they died. That they survived until the ship reached this island, whose inhabitants he knew from having been there before for water and provisions, seemed a miracle to the kind captain; but he was thankful to be spared the pain of consigning them to an unmarked grave.

It was months before life and reason triumphed, and the tender care of the women of the island was rewarded, by returning health of body and mind. And it was, mercifully, little by little that the circumstances of the wreck, in all their indescribable horror, came back to the sufferers, with definite memories of friends and home, and the full realization of their situation, cut off, as the island was, from any but chance and infrequent communication with the world, and with scarcely a hope of their escape from the wreck, and their place of refuge, being dis-

covered by those who would joyfully have braved any and every hardship to find them, and take them home to life and love.

The islanders gave touching accounts of their terrible sufferings from home-sickness, and dilated upon the pain it had been to see them watch, day after day, day after day, for what never came—ships to take them away; any land would have seemed nearer home than this lonely rock in the Southern Sea. The elder woman had spent many hours of every day, since her recovery, with a glass, on the highest point of rock looking towards the North. The younger one was braver and more patient. She was the one who had discovered the sail that morning, but no one knew how she had borne the suspense, before it was plain that the ship would stop at the island, and the joyful certainty: for having announced the longed-for, prayed-for sight, with a calm voice, but deathly-pale face, she had shut herself away from all eyes. The elder woman had laughed, and cried, and torn her hair, and acted like one bereft of reason, while the suspense lasted, and then had fainted, and was insensible still, for aught the men knew.

The captain cut short the details by telling Henry to go ashore, and see what sort of women they were. If they were going to be hysterical and whimsical, full of notions and womanish nonsense, they might wait for somebody that liked that sort of thing. But if they were sensible, and the one that fainted and tore her hair would let that answer till she got to China—why, he would take them along, and they could go home overland.

“Mebby, though, they belong in China; you didn’t say whether they were black or white or yellow. Better let them understand that their accommodations won’t be splendid, and that they may be reduced to small rations; and hurry ’em up. I want to get clear of these rocks mighty quick.”

Having received the captain’s orders, the boats moved off, and bravely rode the heaving sea, and were borne safely over the rocks on the breast of a great surging billow that left them landed on the beach, and then, rearing its gleaming crest on high, broke and fell, creeping back to its fellows in spray and foam, and curling wavelets of brightest green.

The marvellous feat filled Henry with exultation, and thrilled him like the present fulfilment of his wildest hopes and dreams.

As he and the boatmen stepped on shore, they were met by a middle-aged man, with a kind, benevolent face, who asked hastily, “What news? Have they come for our friends? Are they to go?”

“Yes, they are to go, and no time must be lost. Let them understand that,” answered one of the men.

The questioner then turned to Henry, and offered his hand; but Henry stood in a sort of spell-bound ecstasy, with hardly a consciousness, save that his feet pressed dry land; while he looked down on the rock on which they rested with a longing to press his lips and his heart upon it. He could have worshipped it. Tears of tenderness towards it filled his eyes, and he would almost have counted it a boon to be allowed to lie down and die, then and there, with his heart to the earth, and so be buried beneath it.

The pastor—for it was the pastor who greeted him—grasped his hand before he could fairly gain Henry’s attention.

“You are welcome to our island, my dear young friend,” he said, as Henry’s eyes met his, and he recovered by an effort from the spell that bound him. “Though you come to deprive us of cherished friends, you are welcome; I should say rather, *because* you do, you are doubly welcome; but though the spirit is willing the flesh is weak, and selfish sorrow will prevail for a time.”

“You are very kind,” Henry replied, and added, as he thought of the two women, whom he had completely forgotten for the moment, “I am sorry that our coming, which is such delight to me, is to give you pain. I cannot tell you half what a joy it is to me to tread your beautiful little island, and to receive your kind welcome.”

The pastor grasped Henry’s hand again, as he replied, “It must indeed be a happy moment in which your search is rewarded, and you can look upon your friends once more—the dead come to life, the lost found. I probably ought to say *friend* instead of *friends*, as their homes are widely separated, and they were strangers until thrown together by that most melancholy disaster. But you will prove yourself a benefactor to both, the stranger as well as the—friend?—sister?—it must be some one near and dear who has come for the poor banished one. Which one is it?”

Henry had listened respectfully to all that his companion was saying; but his attention was not given so undividedly that he saw at once the bearing of his remarks. When he did, he exclaimed, “Oh, you are mistaken! I know nothing of these strangers you have cared for so kindly. Our coming was a selfish necessity—we only heard of the wreck from your fellow-islanders who came to the ship.”

“Is it indeed so? Ah, well! it was like my poor sinful heart to trace it all to man’s efforts instead of to a Providence, that can turn even our selfish necessities to the furtherance of

his purposes of mercy toward his sorrowing children. If we had time—if your visit to us were not to be so brief and hurried, I should delight to hear from you, for my own spiritual edification, the train of circumstances that led you hither; for I am sure we should see the Lord's hand at every step."

Henry shuddered as he thought with what different eyes this good man would regard him, if he knew of *his* first step towards that unlooked-for destination:

"Our selfish hearts are torn at the thought of parting with these two, who have become so endeared to us by their sufferings, and their many amiable qualities. And yet, daily have we importuned our Father in heaven to bring succor and release, and he has made you, my dear friend, the honored means of answering our prayers."

Henry felt like a miserable hypocrite for not making the truth known. But while the conversation had been going on, they had walked rapidly up the rocky path, and by this time stood at the door of a comfortable little house; and the pastor said, "You are welcome to my home, a thousand times welcome. I am only grieved that you are to make such brief trial of its humble, but most hearty hospitalities."

Two or three young girls stood by the door, crying, and within there were others, young and old, with sorrowful faces; but Henry followed the pastor to an inner room, and looked anxiously at its few occupants; for he began to think that time was passing, and there was none to be lost.

On the bed lay a woman with pale face, closed eyes, and dishevelled hair. She, of course, was the one who had been so wildly excited at the news of a sail, and had fainted. She seemed almost unconscious still, and Henry's heart misgave him as he recalled the captain's imperative orders for haste, and he looked for the other, wondering if she were ready. Some one stood by the bed, chafing the cold hands of the motionless figure, and uttering cheering words, that were clearly unheeded. But she had white hair; and the men had spoken of the younger woman as being quite young. One other woman stood by the bed. But she was elderly too, and besides, Henry was presently introduced to her, and found that she was the pastor's wife.

"She is one of those who are to go with us, is she not?" Henry asked in a low tone, looking at the yet motionless figure on the bed.

"Yes, poor, dear creature, I am distressed about her, and I don't know what else we can do. We have worked over her for hours, and nothing seems to revive her."

"Something must be done at once," said Henry, as a band of bright sunshine that lay across the floor before him faded, and the room seemed darkened by clouds. "Have you given her brandy?" he asked.

"We have no brandy," replied the pastor's wife, "but we have given her other restoratives."

"I have some," said Henry, taking a little flask from his pocket.

In a few moments after the patient had taken the brandy she opened her eyes, and looked languidly at the faces about her; but soon closed them again with a sigh, and the efforts were renewed.

Then she who had been chafing her hands when Henry entered—the one with white hair—took them again, and finding that they were cold, and fell limp from her hold, she clasped her own, and turning with a look of despair in her face, exclaimed in agony, "Oh, is there no help? Will not God give her strength? You have faith—pray—*pray*," and she laid her hand on the pastor's arm, and tried to press him to his knees.

But Henry caught the sleeve of her white tappa-cloth dress, and looked into her face with an intense scrutiny that riveted her gaze upon him.

"Who are you?" he asked at last, almost in a whisper. "Are you Edith Craighead?" and he waited with suspended breath for the answer.

Her lips parted, and a wonderful light came into her brown eyes, but she uttered no word; she only caught Henry's hand that held her sleeve, as if to detain a joyful vision that might escape her.

"It is Edith Craighead," said the pastor, answering for her, as he saw that her lips vainly tried to frame a reply. "You do know her, then! God *has* sent a friend for her."

"I know her father and mother and brothers—I remember her, though she may not remember me: I am from Oxley."

"From Oxley!" cried Edith, in a voice that thrilled every heart; "from home! You have seen *them*—they have seen you, and you will take me to them. O God, did I doubt thy goodness?"

She turned her face upward for a moment, and then, leaning her head against Henry's arm, tearless sobs broke from her, which Henry felt could not relieve the over-wrought feelings she had been holding in check all the morning; and making a sign to those who had come in from the other room, and were sobbing for sympathy, to be quiet, he said, utterly at a loss what was best to say: "I think it is time to go—we must not run the risk of being left."

Edith lifted her head, and the sobs were soon subdued.

"I *do* know you," she said, when her brown eyes had earnestly studied his face for a moment. "You are Henry Hollister, my old playfellow in dear Oxley! But is Mrs. Heine better? How could I forget her for a moment? Dear Mrs. Heine," she said, bending over her—"Why, she is asleep! Dear Mrs. Heine, wake up now—we are going home, you know.—How cold her hands are!—What can it be?"

It was death. Joy had completed what horror and suffering began; and while Edith and Henry had been absorbed in each other, and the pastor in them, and the pastor's wife had thought that she slept, and that the sleep would prove the best medicine, her breath had ceased.

No one thought of anything but the sad truth, except Henry, who could not bring himself to break upon the sacredness of Edith's grief for her friend with reminders that time was precious, and was passing. But by-and-by a fresh blow fell, that even put aside thoughts of the dead from Edith's mind, in the tidings brought by a breathless messenger that the ship was getting under weigh.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CASTAWAYS.

It seemed that the wind had shifted to the dreaded quarter, and sudden wild clouds had begun to scud across the sky, soon after the boats had returned to the island; and while the men were busy getting fresh supplies of provisions for the ship, and almost at the moment that Mrs. Heine's death was discovered, signals were received, making known that the ship was setting her sails, and that the boats must come off at once.

Filled with consternation, the men whose boat was to take the supplies rowed out to the ship, while others hastened to tell the news, and let Mr. Hollister know the urgency of the case. The warning was frozen on their lips by the solemn presence of death; and the next tidings were brought, reluctantly and tardily, when the men returned from the ship, bearing the captain's messages.

He had said that a tremendous storm was coming on, and he must get away from the rocks or go to pieces, and he preferred the first alternative. But he would not go on—he would stand off and cruise about at a safe distance for a couple of days, if there were a prospect of fair weather by that time; but if he found he was likely to have to wait longer than that to get his passengers, they must not blame him if he went without them; and if he did he would be sure to send somebody, or come himself the next voyage.

What language could tell the agony with which Edith and Henry realized the truth; or the torturing alternations between hope and despair during the three days in which the tempest raged; or the dull misery of the two days that followed its cessation, as rayless as the dense fog that lay over the water and enveloped the island, as if to quench any lingering hope in their poor hearts before it lifted to show them an empty sea; or the weariness of hope deferred, when days grew to weeks, and weeks to months, and still they watched and waited in vain.

When the storm was spent, and her poor friend was laid to rest in a sheltered dell, shut away from the sight of the sea, and the sun shone as if there were no woe in the wide world, Edith sank for a time beneath the weight of her grief and that

most harrowing disappointment. She lay for days in a state of nervous exhaustion, too weak to speak or move, vaguely thankful for the bodily languor that saved her from the fulness of mental pain. She sometimes wished that her faint breath would cease altogether, so that she might not recover strength to endure that unendurable longing and despair.

But one day as she opened her eyes listlessly, she saw Henry sitting near the bed, looking so haggard, so utterly wretched, that her heart ached with pity, and she wondered how she could have forgotten that she was not alone in her misery. She really could not remember having thought of him once since the day the fog lifted, and they had stood together on the rock so sadly associated with her dead friend, and taken that long look over the trackless sea.

She recalled with a shiver the expression of his face as he turned towards her, with the glass in his hand, after a vain search for a gleam of hope. She knew that she must have fainted then, for everything was a blank until, she had no idea how long after, she found herself at home, with friends caring for her.

Henry's presence on the island seemed now like a God-sent gift. What could be more comforting than to have some one to share her exile who knew her father, and mother and brothers, and had lived in her beloved Oxley—who was actually linked with her memories of home. But although his presence was a boon to her, it must be an unspeakable trial to him, she knew; and while Henry's occasional glance at her face showed him no change in its still pallor, she was chiding herself for her selfish forgetfulness, and her heart was fluttering with impatience to get well, that she might help and cheer him. They must help each other till their release came, and she began to feel assured that it would come.

She said to herself that her soul had been in a fog all these days—or weeks, she hardly knew which it was—and she was thankful that the fog was lifting now, and that she began to see something beside herself and her own grief; to see that repining and being a burden to her friends were not the ways to make trial a blessing, or to make her worthy of the supreme joy of being restored to her loved ones when it was granted, or even to make the days of her exile pass quickly.

So another week saw her moving about, slowly and with uncertain steps, to be sure, and with a white, thin face, whose smile was one to make the tears start to the eyes that met it; but this was the prelude to health and cheerfulness.

Henry easily and naturally threw off the gloom, so foreign to his temperament, with the first relief of Edith's returning health,

and often made her smile at herself as she recalled how she had expected to have constant need for her helpful efforts. She seemed far more to depend upon him than he upon her; but if she had given way ever so little, she would have found how much her influence was to her mercurial friend. As it was, the days of her convalescence passed quickly and pleasantly to him. The reaction from his depression was much, but Edith's society was far more.

They really had a great many gifts and tastes in common. Both loved music and art, poetry and flowers, and it was a great solace to them, in their banishment from so many of their favorite interests, to be able to talk of what they had seen and heard and accomplished. Then both had that keen appreciation of the joy of existence that belongs to some natures, and that makes every sense an avenue of pleasure or pain.

Henry delighted in their talks of abstract things; there was a pleasant zest in the impulse Edith's thoughts gave to his. But Edith's interest in what had been happening in the great world, in those many long months of exile, was insatiable, and the subject that was of all the dearest and sweetest to Edith, was the one that Henry the least enjoyed. He never avoided it, but when Oxley and Edith's home and friends were the theme, he always felt a sense of shrinking and terror, lest she were on the eve of discovering how undeserving he was of her confidence, and his only desire was to hide it—to let no hint of it appear in his words or manner.

When he was alone, especially in the darkness of night, with the solemn roar of the ocean sounding in his ears, he was often filled with wretchedness, with shame and self-abasement, and would desperately resolve that the very next day should witness his confession, and see him take his just place as an outcast and a criminal.

But sunshine seemed to have the soothing power of the lotus in lulling his convictions, and turning his resolutions into dreamy intentions for some vague future—when Edith was quite well, perhaps. Sometimes he could even persuade himself, that to tell her at all would be satisfying an imagined point of honor at the expense of her happiness—for would it not be a severe blow to her to know that he was unworthy her friendship and respect? And *was* he really unworthy? He had committed a wrong, and disgraced his name; but had he not bitterly repented, and did not every feeling of his soul revolt against the crime, and was not his life to be a protest against it?

In Edith's presence, too, goodness seemed such a simple, natural thing;—how could he realize that the purity of purpose,

the high aspirations that often thrilled him, and made him seem almost to stand on a level with her, were but the echo of her spirit's harmonies, the reflection of her inner light?

Until Edith's strength was fully restored she was the object of general devotion, and her health and comfort were consulted to a degree that made her sometimes laugh, and sometimes seriously remonstrate. She declared that her breaths and her steps were counted; that she should not be surprised to find bits of the stars in her food; that the air was filtered through webs woven of flowers and sunbeams, before it was thought good enough for her. And finally she announced, one morning, that she had been queen of the island, and they her willing slaves long enough, and that this day should end her sway. The next she should descend to the state of an ordinary mortal, eat mortal food, wait upon herself, and have no more favors lavished because she had been so foolish as to be taken ill and make so much trouble.

It could hardly be said that she ceased to be queen of the island, for the admiring, devoted love of the islanders for her knew no bounds; and since they had been so near losing her, and realized more fully than before the certainty that they must lose her some time, it was natural that they should be eager to give constant proofs of their devotion. But she took up the self-assumed employments interrupted by the visit of the *Fleetwood*, and ceased to be a "drone in the little hive, with the state of a queen."

Her home was with the pastor and his wife; and as they had no children, Edith was able to do much for their comfort; indeed, she was like a daughter to them, and a very dutiful one.

Her knowledge of all the womanly arts, too—housekeeping, sewing, drawing, the care of flowers, and so on—came into excellent play. Her suggestions and helpful ingenuity had already wrought great improvements in the island homes, and had awakened an interest among the women in matters of taste and convenience that had never received a thought before. She was astonished, often, to find how much can be done with little, when a woman's skill is put to the test.

Besides all this, she had a little school, composed of the older boys and girls, to which she devoted her mornings. Clearly, she had little time for dreams and repinings.

Henry's dreary days came when Edith's days of idleness were ended, and there were so many hours in which there was no charm to dispel realities, and he came back to a matter-of-fact view of himself and his position. He grew more and more moody and miserable; and by and by became a constant weight

upon Edith's mind, the more when she found that she had lost her power to cheer and divert him. It was an extra and unlooked-for strain upon her strength, that made her duties more wearing and her burdens harder to bear.

Henry had enjoyed talking with the pastor when Edith was by, to give tone and zest to the talks. He had been able then to endure with tolerable composure the good man's persistent assumption that he was interested in the subjects that were most near to his own heart, and that his aims and motives were in sympathy with Edith's; but now it was torture. He avoided him as much as possible, and began to take long, solitary walks, sometimes spending whole days in "exploring the wonders of the island," as he said, in explanation of his absences.

One morning, about three weeks after Edith's recovery and return to active duties, she saw Henry walking gloomily by, on his way to the other side of the island. She waved her handkerchief, and was ready with a word and a smile; but either he did not see her, or chose not to return her greeting, and she watched his retreating figure, feeling sorry for him, and sorry for herself.

When night drew near, and she found that Henry had not come back from his walk, she became very anxious. She would not have put into words, she did not even in her own thoughts, the dread that forced itself upon her. But there were signs of a coming storm, and that was enough to account for her uneasiness: Henry might be in a mood not to notice or care for the storm, or he might have met with some little accident, and need help in getting home.

So she asked the pastor to walk with her in the direction he would be likely to take in returning. It was a relief not to sit quietly with her anxiety, and wait.

The wind was already rising, and the surf was beating heavily upon the rocks, and clouds were gathering, as they walked rapidly along the narrow ridge that looked down upon the rocks and the breakers on one side, and into a deep ravine on the other.

"How wonderful! how glorious!" exclaimed the pastor, stopping short, as the clouds became suddenly illumined by the setting sun, and the sea was like a vast stretch of liquid fire.

It was but for a moment. The next the sun dropped behind a dense bank of clouds lying along the horizon, and the glory departed. Edith had walked on, and the pastor hurried to overtake her. Neither was much inclined to talk; and, indeed, the wind and their rapid gait together left them little breath to spare.

Presently the clouds, which had gathered in heavy black masses by that time, began to give forth quick, sharp flashes, and then the sound of distant thunder mingled with the roar of the sea.

"Stop, Edith!" cried the pastor, taking hold of her arm, as a brighter flash smote their eyes. "We must go back. We shall be overtaken by the storm now, before we can reach home. It is close upon us."

"I will not go back!" Edith cried. "I *know* something has happened, and I am going on to find out what it is. You needn't go. I am not afraid."

"Do you imagine that I will leave you alone, foolish child? You are rash to insist, and I am weak to yield; but come."

On they went, until they reached the summit of another ridge, running inland nearly half way across the island; but at this point sloping, rather abruptly, nearly to the edge of a cliff that overlooked a narrow, deep inlet. Here they stood still, and looked down and around in every direction, but no human being was within sight.

"Call—shout as loud as you can!" said Edith.

The pastor shouted at the top of his voice, and Edith shouted, but the sound was caught by the wind, and broken into fragments almost before it had left their lips. Again and again they called, but to no purpose; the sounds seemed utterly lost in the contending gusts that swept around them.

"This is foolish, Edith," said the pastor; "Henry may even now be at home."

"I am sure he is not," replied Edith, still looking anxiously through the dim light for a moving object. "This is his favorite walk at night. I feel sure he is in trouble."

"We can do no more, and we *must* get home ourselves."

Almost as the words were uttered, a blinding flash swept through the sky, turning the sea into heaving billows of molten silver; a tremendous crash of thunder shook the island, and a fierce, whirling gust of wind swept across from sea to sea, and would have carried Edith and her companion off their feet, if they had not instinctively thrown themselves upon the ground below the summit of the ridge.

When the blinding blaze of the lightning had gone out, and their eyes had grown accustomed to the faded light of the frightened day, the deep darkness of night fell suddenly around them, seeming to press them with its heavy folds. The surf seemed to be foaming and surging at their very feet—so near and enveloping was its roar; it was as if it had been a part of the sudden darkness.

"What can we do now—what is to become of us?" said the pastor in Edith's ear, and she felt that he was trembling and dismayed.

"There's but one thing to do," said Edith, shivering, but brave.

"We can't go home—the wind would blow us into the sea. On this side the ridge we shall be comparatively sheltered from its fury, and we must get to the cave without delay."

"It never can be done!" exclaimed the pastor, horrified at the thought; "you don't know what you are proposing; we must go home."

"We must *not*!" cried Edith. "Think of crossing the cliff in such a wind! You *must* come; there is no time to lose—the cave is our only hope."

She took her companion's hand and drew him after her, reluctantly enough, and against his judgment. But hers was the stronger spirit, and he yielded himself to her guidance.

Around the inlet lay a nearly level plateau, of inconsiderable width; but it helped to make their progress less difficult when once they had reached the foot of the ridge.

Cautiously and slowly, often warned from too near an approach to the edge of the precipice by a flash that came after a longer interval than usual, and sometimes having to lie prostrate until a furious blast of wind had swept by them, they crept around to the other side, where the less solid wall of rock had gradually crumbled away, and made a possible, though dangerous, descent to the narrow beach.

Midway of this descent a shelf of rock jutted out, and an opening in the rock at the end of the inlet, extending in some ten or twelve feet, formed the cave which was to be their refuge from the storm. Fortunately, a tolerably safe access had been made, as it was regarded as one of the natural curiosities of the island. The jutting rock, behind which the rough, irregular steps were formed that led down to the shelf, was a welcome screen from the fury of the wind; but there was nothing to shelter them from the torrents of rain that now fell suddenly as if the heavens had been opened at that moment. After every flash, which disclosed their way for a few steps further, they felt for an instant stunned by its terrific glare, and had to recover their senses before they could take advantage of its fierce aid.

But at last they reached the projecting shelf, and crept along it on their hands and knees, keeping close to the rough wall lest they should fall into the angry waters below, and were soon safe within the cave.

Safe! but what terrible safety it was—a thousand times worse than most dangers. For a moment, as she sat motionless and awe-stricken, Edith felt as if the darkness, the lurid, blinding flashes, the dreadful noise of the sea and the wind, and the crashing thunder, would surely drive her mad.

But the pastor's hand was cold and trembling, and she knew

that his gentle spirit was prostrate. It is not always they who can dare everything for the right whose courage stands physical tests without quailing. Uttering a fervent prayer for help, she quieted as well as she was able the tumult of horror and dismay in her own breast, and set herself to soothe the pastor. She felt hardly able to make herself heard, but she found that her few brave, cheering words were a great comfort to him; and after a time they were both able to endure with a degree of composure the awful sights and sounds of the night, and even to appreciate the stupendous grandeur of the scene, when the lightning showed them, for an instant, the sky and the sea—tumultuous, upheaving, yawning, terrible.

Edith was glad to find the evidences of human visitants in times of peace in the soft mosses and rushes that lined the bottom of the cave. She recalled when they had been spread by some of the boys and girls.

The solemn hours wore slowly on, and at length the thunder and lightning were spent, the wind died away, the rain ceased to fall, and the clouds dispersed, only lying here and there in gray masses, as if too weary with their warfare to depart altogether.

The stars shone out in the clear blue spaces, and the dying moon cast her pale light on the clouds, and on the sea that could not rest if it would. Its roar was deafening still, and indeed sounded deeper and louder, when the noise of the thunder no longer mingled with it. The surf in the inlet was always strong; but now the fierce breakers rushed in with a force that seemed irresistible, and met the opposing rock with a boom like the report of many cannon, and made the rock tremble, steadfast as it was. When the storm was over, Edith found herself waiting for the shock with shrinking nerves, as one waits for the regular booming of cannon near at hand; and nothing wore upon her tired brain, during those long hours, like that.

Though the storm had ceased, Edith did not think of venturing from their retreat, but waited, feeling that only the kind daylight could renew her courage, and fully dispel the terrors of the darkness and the storm. And never did eyes of tempest-tossed mariner, after a night of peril, welcome the day more joyfully than did Edith the first gleam of dawn from across the waters. The pastor had fallen asleep an hour or two before; but sleep never seemed farther from her eyes and brain. Her limbs were stiff and cramped from cold, and from having sat so long; but that faint gleam in the East did not give her courage to stand up and relieve her weariness. The spell of the darkness was on her still, and she shuddered to think of the seething cauldron beneath her. So she only lay back upon the rushes and

moss, and tried to rest, having no power to keep her thoughts from going where they would: now to an anxious search for Henry, now to trace over and over their slow and painful progress to the cave, and again to wonder if anybody would come for them, or if they should have to gather strength of nerve to make their way across that slippery ledge without help. The thought of home and her mother's watchful tenderness brought tears of pity for herself; and as she looked out, in the growing light, over the boundless expanse of terrible billows, her heart utterly died within her, to think that it lay between her and that mother. How had she dared to hope ever to see her again till they met her in heaven?

By-and-by, as she lay with her hands pressed over her aching eyes, she became conscious that a bright light fell upon them, and when she opened them, they were met by the dazzling sunshine that came straight from the East, and shot past her into the recesses of the cave. She raised herself quickly, in spite of her stiffness, and stood up to welcome the glad sight, and glanced back to see how pleasant it was to have only the daylight about her once more.

She ceased to think of the daylight, and for a moment she neither spoke nor moved as her eyes rested upon Henry Hollister, lying in the farther end of the cave. His face was ghastly pale, except that on one cheek and temple were stains of blood; one arm was in a sling lying across his breast, and his eyes seemed twice their usual size as they met Edith's horrified gaze.

Edith's self-possession soon returned, and she went to him and knelt at his side, and pushed the hair off his forehead.

"What has happened to you? how came you here?" she asked, her heart full of pity.

"How came *you* here?" he asked in return.

"We took refuge here from the storm. We came out to find you and we were overtaken."

Henry groaned, and turned his head away; but Edith drew his face into view again.

"What is this?" she asked, laying her hand gently on the wounded arm.

"It is broken, I suppose," replied Henry, his voice so faint that Edith had to put her ear to his lips to catch the words. "There is a deep gash in my cheek, isn't there?"

"Not a deep one," replied Edith, shuddering a little, and more shocked than she would let Henry see, by his forlorn condition. "I hope your arm isn't really broken; how did it happen?"

"I slipped on the loose stones, I believe—I am not sure;"

and he put his hand to his forehead, painfully trying to recall the details of his accident.

"Never mind it, then," said Edith; "don't trouble your poor head to remember."

"I wish I *could* remember—it would be such a relief!" said Henry, his pale face flushed with the effort he had made.

"Would it? Well, then, let me help you," said Edith. "Did you fall on your way to the cave—slip on a stone, coming down the steps to the shelf?"

"No—I was down by the water before I came here; the water, the spray dashing over me, made me conscious;—I was stunned when I fell, I believe."

"Then you must have been going down the cliff to the beach, and fallen within reach of the kind spray."

"Yes, I believe that was the way of it."

"But how did you get up here? that is the wonderful part of it," cried Edith, glad to see the relieved look in Henry's eyes.

"That part I remember better than the fall," said Henry. "I supposed I fixed my arm in this handkerchief, though it seems as if somebody else did it; but I remember climbing up here, when the storm was coming on—it was awful;" and he shuddered at the recollection. "What a night *you* must have had! It is just my fate to bring everybody into trouble."

"Don't be foolish and cross!" said Edith; "but tell me why you didn't let us know you were here when we first came, and let our misery keep yours company?"

"I didn't know it myself until morning. I must have lost my senses when I got back into this corner, and I don't know when they came again; but when I first saw what *seemed* to be human forms, in the glare of the lightning, I was nearly frightened to death. I felt sure they were *not* human, and sure that if they were *unhuman*, there wasn't anything good about them, or they wouldn't have come near me. So I have been staring at you for the last age, trying to make out what and who you were. I tried to call, when I first recognized you as really human, but of course couldn't make myself heard above this horrid din."

Henry was nearly exhausted with his efforts to make Edith hear, but it was so plainly a relief to talk over the horrors of the night, that she would not check him.

"Well, it is all strange and wonderful," she said, as he stopped for want of breath; "but now we must *do* something, and let our amazement take its time when we are at home, in dry clothes, and your arm has been attended to."

She woke the pastor, and told him Henry's story in few

words. Then she left him to his charge while she went to see what their chances were for getting home.

"Never fear but I shall look out for myself," she cried in reply to the pastor's warnings, as she disappeared.

The shelf was slippery, but by dint of great care she reached the steps in safety; and when she stood at the top of the cliff, her eyes were gladdened by the sight of two or three of the islanders close at hand, and others going in various ways, all in search of the missing ones, she knew. Shouts and wavings of hats soon gathered them all about her, and she was greeted like one come from death to life.

She left the details of their adventures for another time, and gave her directions. Two of the men were to go to the cave and help the pastor, who was lame and stiff, and hardly able to move. Others were to hurry back for a canoe and other things needful in removing Henry, who, of course, would have to be lifted and carried like a child. She herself was carried on a chair made of the hands of two of her larger scholars. Before she reached home every woman and child came to meet her; and the wise attentions she received, when at home, probably saved her the illness that might naturally have followed such a night of exposure and nervous excitement.

She was ready to attend to Henry when he arrived, borne in a canoe on the shoulders of four men; and, indeed, he needed her care, for he was very ill; his arm was so inflamed and swollen that it could not be set at once, and fever and chills followed each other in quick succession.

Fortunately the pastor had some knowledge of surgery, and Edith had the natural medical instincts that belong to clear-headed, kind-hearted, steady-nerved women, so that Henry had excellent nursing; and in the course of two days the bone was set, and in two or three weeks more the fever had left him and he was able to sit up, only needing to regain his strength.

But from that time his recovery was slow, and his patient nurse was unable to understand why she could see no improvement for days together, unless his mind, which was clearly not at ease, were keeping him back.

She devoted herself to his diversion untiringly; but little by little the old gloomy, constrained manner returned. He was painfully grateful for all she did for him, but the frank, almost childlike, pleasure in her presence, and distress at her absence, and the exacting demands upon her attention, that had made her care of him so easy and satisfactory, were over; and it was all a painful mystery to her.

CHAPTER XV.

CONFESSION.

It was several weeks after the storm and Henry's accident, that he and Edith sat one night upon the rocks, while the golden twilight faded, and the moonlight fell softly from the sky.

Edith's heart had been very sad that day—too faint and weary, it seemed, to bear its burdens any longer; and her thoughts, as she sat gazing drearily at the relentless sea, were reaching beyond it, in desperate yearnings for those whose presence would have been rest, happiness—heaven. She was tired of pain, and shrank from what she still might have to endure. Her eyes seemed too heavy to look up at the quiet stars, and let them tell her, as they often had told her before, that they had seen her home and that all was well, for the same Hand that kept them in their calm, steadfast courses, and guarded her in her exile, held those she loved in safety. The moonlight sometimes told her the same sweet, comforting story; but now she could only hear the moaning of the sea that could find no rest; and the moonlight, as its serene radiance fell upon it, seemed to mock its mighty agony.

Henry's thoughts were brooding in bitter discontent over his hard fate, with the added dread of the discovery that must come sooner or later, which had grown to be a vengeful spirit, dogging his steps by night and day. He hated the sea, and cursed it in his heart, as the barrier that stood between him and peace of mind. In the egotism of morbid misery, he charged himself, too, with Edith's unhappiness, and was saying to himself that it would be better for her if he were lying under those hateful waves, and had never come with his sin and shame, like an evil genius, to destroy the peace of the island.

"Well, my dear children," broke in the pleasant voice of the pastor; "has the moonlight wrought an enchantment that seals your lips? I saw two forms against the sky, and I listened for your voices, to assure myself that they belonged to Edith and Henry; but I listened in vain."

"We have been unusually silent," answered Edith; "but we shall be glad to have you come and talk to us, and if the spell is an uncanny one, you will break it."

"Such sweet, heaven-given radiance as this can hardly cast evil spells," said the pastor, taking a seat beside Edith. "It makes even the ocean look gentle: as Gennesaret must have looked when the Lord had spoken peace to its tumult, and Peter thought he might walk safely over its waters."

Edith could not trust herself to speak, and Henry dared not utter the bitter words that rose to his lips.

After a moment's silence, the pastor went on: "Even the surf seems gentle to-night; it falls with a quiet plash of content—not with its usual fierce energy."

He waited a moment, and then continued: "The moonlight on the ocean always seems to me like delicate little flowers, blooming on rugged mountains. It is a mingling of tenderness and power that we meet with constantly in our Father's works. Wherever there is a display of might that can work sorrow and disaster, or inspire terror in our poor, timid souls, there is sure to be some token of love, and care for the small and weak, that ought to reassure and comfort us. Could the Being who fills the night with such soft beauty, making even old Ocean look as if he never had a thought of destruction, and that paints the tiniest flower in fairest colors, and keeps it as safe on the mountain-top as in the most sheltered garden-nook—could He fail to be pitiful and tender to us, his children? How can we distrust him?"

Edith was usually so quick to respond to such thoughts, and even to help him to higher flights of faith and imagination, that the pastor turned towards her inquiringly, as she still was silent, and saw that her face was pale and her lips were compressed, and her eyes full of a pain that was beyond the relief of tears. Henry's gloomy face was shaded by his hat.

"Did it ever occur to you, Henry," he said, "what a beautiful picture of our Saviour that scene on Gennesaret presents? I believe there is no moment of his ministry that comes to me so often as that: when he stands in his gentle majesty on the tempestuous sea, and, with a word, stills its stormy waves, and then lets his terrified disciples in the ship hear his well-known voice—'Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid.' Could anything be more tenderly reassuring? And there never was a tempest of trouble yet, in which a disciple was tossed, where Jesus did not appear—was not *present*—to speak peace, and to say, 'Be of good cheer, be not afraid.' Is it not true?" he asked, after waiting vainly for a reply.

"Yes, I suppose so. I have no doubt he is always ready to help his disciples—those whom you call Christians," replied Henry, in a bitter tone.

"He counts all as his disciples who trust him, and look to him for help in trouble."

"Yes—I know it."

"We dishonor him when we doubt his love for us, and we may lose the comfort and good cheer of his presence in our troubles, by unbelief. If we shut our eyes and ears, we can neither see him nor hear his voice."

"If neither eyes nor ears are given us, we can hardly be called upon to use them," said Henry, coldly.

"When once we have seen God's hand plainly directing our steps, and working out purposes of mercy for others through us, methinks we have small excuse if we begin to question his love and purposes of mercy toward us."

Henry sprang from his seat, and stood before Edith and the pastor.

"You mean that you think God sent *me* here as a mercy to *her*—I know it, for I have heard you say so before, and I have been silent, like the hypocrite that I am—and you think that proves that I have a right to trust in God. I will tell you *what* sent me here, and you can judge how much right I have. I am a coward, added to my other sins, or I should not have accepted your confidence and friendship all this time, and worn the semblance of honor when I am covered with dishonor and infamy. I was in Mr. William Craighead's employ—that much you know. That I forged—*stole* from him seven thousand dollars, and that his mercy was all that saved me from being sent to jail, like any other felon, you know now. I was on my way to China, in the hope of earning enough to repay what I stole—dreaming, fool that I was, that a paltry restitution would wipe out the stain, and buy back my honor and good name. The stain *never* can be wiped out. I had better have gone to prison. But what do you think *now* of the Providence that sent me here 'to work out purposes of mercy for others,' and of my right to expect mercy—to listen for words of *good cheer*? You abhor me now, and will feel that my presence taints the pure air of your island. I am a coward, as I said, or else I should bury myself and my disgrace in the sea. But I will rid you of the hateful sight. I will never show myself on this side the island, and when a ship comes to take you away—you, to whose friendship I have dared aspire—I will stay behind, and wait for another. Or let me have a boat, and I will go to some other island and wait."

Henry had spoken with fierce vehemence, and when he finished, he turned abruptly away, and was about to spring from the rock. But the pastor, who with Edith had listened in

shocked, speechless amazement, found voice now, and exclaimed, "Stop, my son! my poor boy!" grasping his arm at the same time. "Do not leave us so. Do you dream that we, who claim to be the disciples of our compassionate Saviour, will cast you off because you have been so unhappy—so unfortunate as to fall by the way? Ah, my son, you little know the spirit we are of! We only feel our hearts going out to you the more, and weeping over you, as Christ did over the lost sheep of the house of Israel. We will—we *do* take you in our arms of faith, and carry you straight to the feet of the tender Shepherd of Israel, and tell him that you have erred and strayed; that you were a lost sheep, but we have found you and brought you back to the fold."

"I never was in the fold," said Henry, completely overcome by the tender earnestness of the pastor's words and manner.

"Never mind—you can enter now. Jesus is the door; by him all poor wandering sheep may enter in and find pasture. He came to seek and to save the lost. Sit down, and Edith will tell you how safe and pleasant the fold is, while I go and ask the Good Shepherd to let you in."

Henry stood motionless when the pastor was gone, not daring to raise his eyes to Edith, who was as silent as he, and yet feeling that if he left her now, without a word or a look, he should never have courage to meet her again.

At last the silence became intolerable, and he turned towards her. She stood with her hands clasped, and her sorrowful eyes met his. It might have been the face of a pitying angel; and she looked like one, as she stood clad in white, with the moonlight wrapping her about in its silvery brightness.

"You will not speak to me; you despise me too much, and I cannot wonder," Henry said in a husky voice, as Edith found no words.

"*Despise* you! O no! but I am so—*so* sorry for you."

"It is not possible for you to forgive me."

"I have nothing to forgive. You have not wronged *me*."

"Yes, I have. I deceived you, and made you trust me."

"I cannot wonder at that—at your dreading to tell us, and delaying as long as you could."

Henry felt deeply the unintended stab Edith's words gave.

"I wronged your brother—can you forgive that?" he said, after a pause.

"He forgave and trusted you: that is enough for me. O Henry, the wrong was against God and yourself, and it is only God's forgiveness that you need. Tell me if you have sought that?"

Edith's tones were very gentle, but very grave, and she laid her hand on his arm, and looked earnestly into his face.

"I believe I have only thought of the disgrace," Henry replied, brokenly. "I have *not* repented before God."

"It is all you have to do then. Believe me, I never was more your friend than at this moment. You have the very same place in my heart, only with an added anxiety to see you really safe: trusting in a strength greater than your own. There is but one place where poor, weak human nature is safe—the fold our dear friend spoke of. Its shelter is freely offered, with pardon for the past and help for the future. Will you not promise to seek it?"

"What am I to do? My soul is in the blackest darkness," said Henry, hopelessly.

"There is nothing to be done but 'ask and receive,' 'knock and enter,'" said Edith.

"I have not prayed for years."

"How dreary!—but you will begin to-night."

They went down from the rocks then. As they parted at the pastor's door, Edith held out her hand, and its warm grasp, her smile, and the comfort they gave him, Henry did not soon forget.

It was not possible that Henry's spirits should not recover their genial tone when the weight of his dismal secret, and the dread of its exposure, and the miserable sense of the falsehood he was acting, were removed. His sin rested on his conscience more heavily than before, and he realized its true heinousness now; but all his bitter, morbid feelings were gone, and he never shrank from his friends, or their patient efforts to direct his gropings after the light.

His wrong-doing was never referred to again, except once, when he forced himself to introduce the subject, and insisted that Edith should listen, that he might tell the story of his concealment in Jacques's tower, the kindness of Dick and Zandy, and Zandy's wonderful sacrifice of her hair.

Since the first day of Edith's recovery, after her being left on the island with Mrs. Heine, so nearly lifeless, the details of the wreck had never been talked of. In those days of mental and physical weakness, it had been a relief to the poor sufferers to tell the fearful story, and have the sympathy of their kind friends. But it soon came to be a tacitly avoided subject; and all that Henry knew of the disaster he learned from the pastor. His idea that others might have been saved, as well as Edith and Mrs. Heine—that perhaps Edith's brother and his wife might have been rescued by some other vessel, was put to flight

by the pastor's sorrowful assurance that they were among the dead in the boat from which Edith was rescued.

Henry often regarded Edith, in her unselfish cheerfulness, almost with awe. It seemed incredible that a human soul could have passed unscathed through such an awful experience; that a gentle woman could live and smile, and take an interest in ordinary affairs, with such scenes and such grief locked up in her memory and burdening her heart. It is one of the many mysteries of human existence that can only be admitted—never solved.

Edith now found Henry's presence as cheering as it had been saddening during the weeks of his depression. He relieved her in many ways—insisting upon sharing the labors of her school, for one thing, and was only sorry that he could not induce her to sit with folded hands. She never seemed able to convince him that such idleness would be misery.

Every day the sea was questioned with longing eyes. But it gave back no answer of hope, until fourteen months had passed.

In March the *Fleetwood* had left Henry on the island. In May of the following year, in the dawn of a bright morning, with no threatening calm on sea and sky, a sail gleamed in the West.

Henry wrung Edith's hands with a frantic energy of congratulation, and flew to the rock where, during all those months, he had kept signal fires ready to light. Having seen the flames shoot redly up, and feverishly calculated the chances of its glow reaching out to the white speck on which their hopes were centred, he ran to the rock near by, where, from the signal-staff, already the white flag floated out on the breeze.

"Can they see them?—the flag and the fire?—they must, they shall!" he cried wildly, taking the glass from the pastor's hand.

"They will soon, if they do not now," was the reply; "they are heading this way, and the wind is in the right direction."

"I can see their flags—I can see men moving, like flies;—how far off they are!—how they creep! Can we do nothing more? If they should go by—O God! if they should leave us now!"

"They will not, I am sure of it; don't be afraid," said Edith in a quiet voice, having joined the group unnoticed.

"I am sure of it, too," said the pastor, solemnly. "As if you were already on that ship, I feel that she is to carry you home."

"How *can* you feel so sure, when you remember how it was

before?" cried Henry, turning sharply upon them. He buried his face in his hands, and made a strong effort to control the frenzied excitement that made him tremble from head to foot, and almost overcame him. He felt for the moment as if he must give vent to his torturing anxiety in shrieks and prayers to heaven for help; that they might be saved from a fate worse than death: seeing the ship go by—being left behind again.

"It is impressed upon me that you are to leave us now," said the pastor, sadly, in spite of himself; and, looking through the glass, he added, "you can see that she comes nearer, now. She is certainly making for the island."

Henry uncovered his pale face, and took the glass with a tolerably steady hand.

He soon gave it back to the pastor, and with a shout of joy and triumph he waved his cap in the air. "It is true—blessedly true! Edith, we shall get home now."

He dashed off to the rock to replenish the signal-fires, and make assurance doubly sure; and Edith sat quietly down beside the pastor, with most of the islanders gathered about her, and watched the on-coming sail. The few words she could utter, in that time of inexpressible gladness and of grief at parting, were of grateful affection for those she was to leave, and assurances of her undying remembrance of them and all the kindness that had made her exile so much less bitter than it might have been: that had given real sweetness to what must else have been *only* bitter.

Henry joined them again presently, in a more composed frame of mind, and all watched the ship coming nearer and nearer, silence falling, after a time, that was unbroken by a word, until Henry suddenly cried out, "It is the *Fleetwood*, as I live!"

"*She is not going to China!*" he exclaimed, after another silence, as the evident truth thus tardily flashed upon him.

"No," said Edith, "she is on her way *from* China, and will take us straight home! How quietly I say it!" she cried. "Am I dreaming, that I can say those words so calmly?"

"You are not dreaming, my child," said the pastor, "but God is helping you to keep your strength for the time of need."

Edith saw that Henry had seated himself and was looking very sober, and quickly divined what was in his thoughts. She waited to give the result of her own considerings to Henry by-and-by, in the long days when there would be little to do but talk of home, and of plans and hopes for the future.

But she confided to the pastor how fortunate she thought it that the ship was to take them to New York instead of to

China, for Henry's sake as well as her own. For now she could see to it that he stayed in New York, and did not see China at all.

The pastor heartily approved her intention, and the dropping of the anchor dispelled every thought from Henry's mind, but the farewells and getting on board.

Those farewells—who can tell how sad they were? Who can wonder if, at the last moment, even the joy of the happy end to their banishment was swallowed up in the pain of the parting? Who can tell how each stroke of the oars that bore them away from the island, smote upon their hearts, and upon the heavy hearts of those who stood looking after them through blinding tears.

How eager the winds and the waves were to bear them away, when once they were on the ship; how soon their forms were lost in the lengthening distance, and how bereft and desolate the island seemed, when the last gleam of the sail had disappeared "below the verge," and their sorrowing friends turned away from the sea in silence and grief.

CHAPTER XVI.

A SUDDEN RESOLVE.

"OH, GRANDMAMMA! you can't imagine how lovely it seems to be here," said Helen, as, the day after her arrival in Oxley, she sat with her grandmother on the piazza, looking out upon the lawn and lake and western hills.

"And you cannot imagine, my dear, how lovely it seems to have you here. I believe I have been as impatient for your coming as you have been."

"It did seem as if the doctor never would say I was well enough to travel; and I didn't see how I ever could be any better until I had travelled to Oxley."

"Now you are here, I shall expect to see you improve every day, and you must be sure not to disappoint me, my love."

"I shall try not to, grandma; but it does look like such an undertaking to get well! I can here, better than anywhere else, I know"—

"It is natural that you should feel so, darling, while you are weary from your journey; but you will find it easy to get well, when once you are rested."

"Yes, grandma, I dare say I shall. Oxley is sweeter than ever this summer, isn't it?"

"I am glad if it seems so to you, dear."

"I am sure the lake never looked so much like emeralds, and the grass never was so green, and the trees were never so tall, nor the hills so high and grand. And those dear old gray Brothers! they are too sober, I know; and yet they always remind me of those lovely Cheerybles, Charles and Ned; I suppose, only because they are always together, and look so much alike. When the boys come home, I hope I shall be well enough to go to the island, and to Black Pool, and all the dear old places; I should like so much to see them again."

"What should you like to see again, dear?" asked her mother, coming out in time to hear Helen's last words.

"I should like to be well enough to go pic-nicking, mamma, when Dick and Royal get home."

"Of course you will be, after a few weeks, darling. Only be patient, and careful not to take any more colds, and it will all

come right. There come grandpapa and Grace from the village; I wonder if they have any letters; and here are Zandy and the children. Come, all of you, and report yourselves;" cried she, as they drew near from different directions.

"We have been out to have a chat with Miss Flyte, and give her some sugar, and find how she feels about taking her cousin Helen for a bit of a drive this afternoon," was Zandy's response.

"We have been to the post-office," said Grace, "and here is a letter for Aunt Louisa from Royal, and one for me from Dick—you know you had the last one, Zandy."

Zandy deigned no reply, and Mrs. Craighead took the letter and read it aloud:—

SARANAC, July 10.

MY DEAR MOTHER: It is bed-time—that is to say, eight o'clock, but I have begged the loan of a tallow-dip that I may send you a line before we plunge into the wilderness. We are all three enjoying it up here hugely, and there never was anything so astonishing as our appetites—that is, Mr. Hollister's and mine; I can't say so much for Dick's, and he has turned out to be a poorer walker than I am! How I do crow over him for that, because he is a "country boy" and I a "city exquisite," as he has been known to state. He has gone to bed now, "clean drug out," as Tom McLane, one of our guides, says; but he sends his love to everybody, and says he *is* as good a walker as I am. Mr. Hollister shot a deer to-day, and Tom says he is getting a steadier aim all the time. I am afraid he can't say as much for Dick and me. But my tallow-dip is going out, and my eyes are shutting up, so I must say good night, and go to bed. We are in Tom's cottage—it isn't exactly *gothic*,—and start from here in the morning at four, and he will send this to the hotel at the head of the lake by one of his little boys. I hope dear Helen is better, and give my best love to grandpa and grandma and all.

Your loving son,

ROYAL.

Royal and Dick had started, with Stephen Hollister, for the Adirondacks, some days before Helen was able to leave home. They were to be gone three or four weeks longer, and to spend the latter part of their vacation at Oxley. Dick and Zandy were to return with their aunt and cousin to New York in the autumn for another winter, unless it was found necessary for Helen to go South again. Nothing had been decided farther than that.

Grace was to visit some old friends of her mother's on the Hudson later in the summer, but for the present she was to be with the Craigheads, and Zandy was too happy in being at home

once more, and too busy with her friends, and visiting all her old haunts, to give much thought to anything that was not quite to her liking.

Carrie Reynolds had written frequently, and had kept Zandy faithfully informed of all that happened; but still they found so much to talk about, and were together so much that Helen declared herself quite overlooked.

The most remarkable development with regard to Carrie's family was, that Mart had taken to studying so hard, that Carrie was afraid he might hurt himself; that he was considered the best scholar in school the last term, and had decided to go through college and to be a lawyer. Also, that he had grown quite stylish in his dress and manners, and wanted to have the house kept in order, and have his mother and sisters look fine. When Zandy asked if he was nicer at home than he used to be, Carrie did not answer very heartily that he was. "But I think that will come by-and-by," she said. "I am so glad he has any ambition, and cares to be something, that I can't complain a bit."

"You never told me a word about it in any letter," said Zandy.

"No, because I knew you didn't like him, and I thought it would be time enough to tell you when you could see that he really had improved."

"How did you know I didn't like him, Carrie?" asked Zandy. "I never told you so."

"As if anybody needed to be told whom you like and whom you don't!" returned Carrie, laughing.

When two or three weeks had passed, and Helen seemed not to be gaining strength as fast as her friends had hoped, Dr. Parr advised her taking her to the Springs. He was confident she would find certain waters beneficial; and when her father came to Oxley, as he did soon, it was decided that the experiment should be made. William insisted that his mother should go with them, but she did not think it possible.

Zandy broke in upon the discussion at length, by taking her grandmother's hand and leading her out of the room, saying, "Grandma and I will have a little private conversation, at this point."

When they rejoined the circle she said, "It is all settled now. Grandma is going, and I am to keep house, and take care of Corrie and Johnny, and receive the boys when they come home."

"I approve of Zandy's plan," said her grandfather; "she is quite old enough to take some care and responsibility. The

servants are trustworthy, and I propose that we decide, now, to go next Tuesday, and leave Zandy to keep house. She shall let us see how well she can do it."

There was some further discussion, but that was the final decision, and Zandy was in high spirits over the triumph of her daring proposition. Mrs. Craighead often sighed, during the few busy days before the departure, at the sudden breaking of the illusion that Zandy was still a child; and often wondered if she were justified in putting such a burden upon her. But her husband had no such misgivings; he believed in girls beginning early to be useful.

The only drawback to Zandy's perfect satisfaction was Helen's disappointment. It did not damp her ardor in the least to learn that Grace had asked to be allowed to stay with her, and had been told that it was better for Zandy that she should not.

"Of course, I know well enough," she said to herself, "that Dick would like to find Grace here when he comes; but he won't, and I am dreadfully glad of it. I suppose I am like the dog in the manger, for of course Dick and I never can be *very* good friends again; but it is nice to think how Grace will hate to have him here, and herself away, for a week or two; and then she will have to go and make her visit very soon after, and so—maybe Dick *might* get over liking her so much, if he didn't see her for a long time, and then we might be friends—it would be lovely! I will be as sweet to him as I possibly can, and see."

She felt decidedly desolate, and very responsible, that Tuesday, as she stood on the platform at the station, and saw the cars steam away, and caught the last flutter of Helen's handkerchief from the car-window. But the children must not see her cry; and then Mr. Boyd and Carrie were coming to take tea with her. She must hurry home to arrange the flowers, and see that everything was in order, and carry out some of her grandmother's many injunctions. So she behaved in the bravest manner; and she very much enjoyed her new sense of importance and dignity in sitting in her grandmother's place at the tea-table, opposite Mr. Boyd. Corrie and Johnny did their part very well, too, in maintaining the character of the new *régime*.

Mr. Craighead had left orders at the post-office to have all letters sent on to the Springs; but Wednesday morning Zandy discovered one that must have arrived before the departure and been overlooked. It was addressed to her grandfather, in Mr. Hollister's handwriting; and several times that day Zandy took it up and looked at it wistfully, wondering what it was about,

and wishing she dared to open it. That night she dreamed that Dick was drowned; that Royal had fallen off a precipice, and that Mr. Hollister had been torn to pieces by bears; and the next morning, as soon after breakfast as she could get rid of the children, she shut herself up in the library, and, feeling very guilty, opened the letter.

It said that Dick had been taken suddenly ill; that when he was first taken they had been camping out; but they had lost no time in getting him to the nearest house, which was, fortunately, that of one of their guides, and very comfortable. He had been moved without much discomfort, as they had carried him in a boat, spread with hemlock boughs and blankets, and a doctor who came over from the nearest hotel had left medicines and directions, and pronounced his illness not to be of a serious nature. Mr. Hollister thought it only right to let Mr. Craighead know the facts, while he felt sure that he might safely trust Dick to his and Royal's care, and that of the kind people they were with. Of course, if any change became apparent, they would telegraph at once from the nearest point of communication, and would write as often as possible, etc.

Zandy read the letter through quietly, after the cry of distress the first few lines wrung from her, and then sat a moment pale and trembling, but thinking very hard. Gradually her face grew resolute, and rising and ringing the bell energetically, she said aloud, "Yes, I shall do it. It is right, and whether it is or not, *I shall do it.*"

"Rachel," she said, when Rachel appeared, not in the least regarding her ejaculations of wonder at the paleness of her face, "I wish you would get me the village paper as quickly as you can. I want to see a time-table."

"A what, Miss Zandy?"

"A time-table, Rachel. Bring me the paper, and don't stand looking so stupid."

Rachel brought the paper, and having consulted it, Zandy said further: "I want you to tell Reuben to have the carriage ready at half-past twelve. I shall have to find out how we are to go when we get to the station."

"Go? Where? who's a going anywhere, Miss Zandy?" gasped Rachel.

"I am going somewhere, and you are going with me."

"Where to? in the cars?" cried Rachel, in horrified accents.

"Yes, in the cars; and now go and pack a trunk with a dress or two, and as many other things as you think I will need, for—I don't know how long—and put in things enough for your-

self, and be ready at half-past twelve. Don't shake your head in that solemn way, Rachel, for you *are to go.*"

"Where to?" demanded Rachel, as if further speech and all power of motion were an impossibility, until she knew the answer to that brief question.

"Well, if you must know, a letter from Mr. Hollister says that Master Dick is very ill in the Adirondacks; and I am going to take care of him, and going to take you with me."

"You are out of your senses, Miss Zandy," cried Rachel, staring at her anxiously, "I shall go straight for the doctor," and she turned to leave the room.

"Come back, Rachel!" cried Zandy, imperiously. "You will do no such thing. You will do as I tell you, *at once.*"

"I do just wish your grandma was to home. She'd never forgive me letting you go tramping round the country like that, let alone me going too," said Rachel, in despair.

"You have nothing to do with *letting* me, Rachel. I shall tell grandmamma how it was; and I *command* you to pack the trunk, and get ready to go with me."

Rachel could hardly believe her own eyes and ears. Was this really the Miss Zandy who had been a baby in her arms such a little while ago, and never yet had seemed to her like anything but a child? It certainly was, and yet she would as soon have thought now of disobeying mistress herself. She meekly departed to do her bidding, while Zandy put on her hat and hurried away to her friend Carrie, to engage her services as housekeeper in her absence.

Carrie's consternation knew no bounds, when she had heard of Zandy's intention. She exhausted every argument, and devised every expedient to induce Zandy to give up her wild scheme, in vain. Her most urgent entreaty was that Zandy should confide in Mr. Boyd; he might even go with her, and that would be so safe and pleasant.

"I couldn't trust him," Zandy declared. "If he couldn't go, and I don't believe he could, because I heard him tell grandmamma that he should be very busy until his vacation, he would make a dreadful fuss, and, maybe, telegraph to grandpa. I should ask him how I am to get there, if I dared, but I don't. I shan't ask *anybody's* advice, because I don't intend to take it, and so there is no use."

"Have you plenty of money?" asked Carrie.

"I never once thought of it!" exclaimed Zandy, aghast.

"Haven't you *any*?"

"Not five dollars of my own, and I must leave the house-keeping money for you!"

"How much do you suppose it will take?"

"I should think fifty or a hundred dollars."

"O dear! Zandy! how can you get so much? I do wish I had it to lend you. If we only could see Mr. Chandler. Can't you drive over to Granby?"

"No, indeed; because, you see, I should lose the one o'clock train, and I expect the next letter will go to the Springs, so I can't wait."

"Oh, Zandy! I am afraid to have you go. If it shouldn't be right, then something might happen."

"It can't be wicked; and, anyway, I am going to take the risk."

"Zandy, dear!" cried Carrie, in shocked tones, "don't say *that* for pity's sake."

"Now please hush, and let me see what I shall do," said Zandy; and she leaned her elbows on the table, and shaded her eyes with her hands, while she meditated deeply for a quarter of a minute. At the end of that time, she started up—

"That is what I shall do."

"What?" asked Carrie.

"Ask Miss Bean to lend me a hundred dollars. She will do anything for me, since she connived at selling my hair, and I know she has plenty of money."

"Isn't it in the bank?"

"No; in a bag between her mattress and feather-bed. I must go this second. You will be at grandpa's at twelve o'clock, then, to pacify the children, and stay there every minute till they come home from the Springs, or *something* happens.

"What if they should go after you?"

"They can't overtake me, because I shall travel night and day."

"I hope you will find Dick better, dear."

"I don't think about that," answered Zandy, hurrying away.

Miss Bean declared herself "never so flustered and beat in her life;" not even that morning she could never forget, compared with this in perplexity. But Zandy was so urgent, and so peremptory, that she produced her money bag and counted out the hundred dollars.

"You *know*, my dear," said Miss Bean, as she nervously handled the bills, "it isn't that I wouldn't gladly lend you ten times a hundred dollars, if I had it, which I haven't; but it's being privy again to—to—"

"My dreadful doings," said Zandy, laughing. "You may say anything you like; I shan't lay it up against you. You are

an angel to do this for me, after the other trouble we had together."

"I only hope your grandma won't lay it up against me that I helped you to go off alone to the land's-end," said Miss Bean, shaking her head pensively.

Zandy held her money so tight, as she hurried home, that her fingers ached. She concluded to have Rachel sew a part of it into her dress before they started, and to carry the rest herself in a Russia-leather reticule, as it was all in small bills, just as Miss Bean had received it from her customers, and would have filled a dozen little purses like Zandy's.

She found Johnny riding Miss Flyte, and Corrie with all her dolls in the drawing-room, giving them a grand ball; but she had no time to remonstrate. Rachel had nearly filled a trunk, according to her limited knowledge of what was needed, and was herself arrayed for the journey, looking heated and dismal, but submissive.

"That's right, Rachel," said Zandy. "O, just wait a second before you lock it up."

She came back very soon with her arms and hands full of her grandfather's winter dressing-gown and slippers, and bottles containing arnica, camphor, paregoric, castor oil, ammonia and cologne.

"This is all the medicine I can find," she said. "I suppose grandma took the case with her. Now I must go and see Betsey, and you can lock the trunk."

Betsey stood upon her dignity with regard to receiving Miss Reynolds as her mistress. She even looked upon Zandy's authority as housekeeper as a token of the foolish indulgence of her grandparents. Nothing could have convinced her that Miss Zandy was anything near being grown up. So Zandy found it necessary to save her own dignity, by assuming that Betsey's silence meant consent, and bidding her good-by pleasantly. Betsey had, fortunately, so far condescended to wink at what she characterized in her own mind as a "crazy prank," as to get a nice little dinner and a lunch ready. If she had been as mindful as Zandy herself of their needs, she and Rachel would have gone away without a mouthful.

Carrie was left to explain the mystery to the children, who were intensely curious and excited over the confusion of preparation, and seeing the trunks and hand-bag, and Zandy and Rachel driving away to the station.

CHAPTER XVII.

FORTUNE FAVORS THE BRAVE.

THE state of Zandy's mind, during the first stage of her journey, was as variable as the scenes that came and went so swiftly, as the train rushed on.

One moment she was elated at the thought of her courage in venturing so much for Dick's sake, and with the prospect of taking care of him, at least for a time; and the next she was plunged into the depths of despair, over the intricacies of the journey, and the rashness of the undertaking, and at the thought that she might do Dick harm instead of good—she knew so little about nursing. At one moment, she would feel only serene satisfaction in the arrangements she had made at home, and was sure her grandfather would be charmed by this sudden display of wisdom and energy, and that Helen would be glad to see such proof of a forgiving temper; the next, she was equally sure that her grandfather and everybody would be horrified, and consider her a bold, rash girl. Sometimes she pictured Dick as just ill enough to be safe in her care, and delighted to see her; then as being dangerously ill, and needing her grandmother, and upraising her for coming herself; again, Dick was fully recovered, and only laughed at her foolish haste. All this time she looked quiet enough, except that her cheeks burned, and there was an anxious, restless expression in her eyes, while they followed the line of the woods and the fields, as if they were the perplexities she was considering.

Rachel's face gradually lost its dismal puckered-up expression in the excitement of seeing so many people, and of the rapid motion; and at one of the stopping-places she directed Zandy's attention to a gay party who had taken the seats opposite theirs: "There's some nice, rich-looking folks over there."

Zandy glanced across to their opposite neighbors, and made a rapid inventory of white straw hats, trimmed with light blue ribbons and plumes, very light buff dresses elaborately adorned with ruffles and braidings, bright yellow gloves, and immense waterfalls of light hair, with long curls depending therefrom. Then there was a very young man with a very slight moustache, also with bright yellow gloves.

"I wonder where they're agoin'," said Rachel.

"Not far, I should think, dressed like that," said Zandy, and, glad to have something to divert her thoughts, she changed her seat, that she might have a better view of the gay young ladies, who seemed too much occupied with each other to notice anybody else. But very soon she found them looking at her curiously, and making her the subject of conversation; and she was wishing she had not changed her place, when she suddenly felt herself seized about the neck by a pair of small arms, that held her tight, in spite of her own and Rachel's efforts to unclasp the small hands. Her hat was pushed over her eyes, but shouts of laughter met her ears, mingling with Rachel's scolding; and when she was at length released, and the mother of the small offender was administering punishment, she saw, as well as heard, how amused the young ladies and the young man were over her discomfiture.

With hot cheeks she took her seat beside Rachel. She was still feeling angry and uncomfortable, when one of the young ladies gave her a look; and, nodding and laughing in answer to some remark from the young man, came and sat down before her.

"I thought I'd come and apologize; but it was so perfectly ridiculous, so absurd, you know—we couldn't help laughing, if we'd have died for it—so awfully comical, you know;" and the young lady burst into fresh peals at the thought. "Children are such hideous little monsters—I never could stand 'em. I make my brothers and sisters—the small fry, you know—keep out of *my* way. I *wish* you'd come over and sit with us—Floss and me and Cousin Morry—we'd like awfully to have you. Come"—and the young lady tossed her curls and feathers, and laid her yellow glove on Zandy's hand.

"Thank you," said Zandy, "I prefer to stay here."

"Oh, you needn't be bashful, you know; you wouldn't mind Floss and me—two girls; and Cousin Morry—he's a nice fellow—not our *own* cousin exactly, being as his grandmother was my step-grandfather's second cousin, ha, ha! Close relations, ain't we? But we *call* it cousins, for the fun of the thing. Say, I *wish* you'd come over. Morry wants you to; he thinks you're *awful* pretty."

Zandy gazed at the speaker in utter amazement, and the deep color in her cheeks spread over her forehead and to the tips of her ears.

"It's the solemn truth, you know. Are you going to stop at Lyons, or going on?"

"Going on."

"You ain't going to travel all night, are you?"

"Yes."

"My gracious, that's funny."

The young lady paused, and eyed Zandy and Rachel, and the initials "A. C." on the handsome travelling bag.

"She's your waiting-maid, ain't she?" nodding at Rachel.

"No."

"She's travelling with you, though, ain't she? ain't she one of your ma's servants?"

"She is one of my grandmother's servants," answered Zandy, coldly.

"Oh!—We're going to Saratoga; maybe you're going there too?"

"No—at least, I'm not going to stop."

"Going further yet, hey? good gracious! We expect to have a high old time; we know loads of people there. We've 'most danced our feet off at the seashore, and I expect we'll be about dead when we get through at Saratoga. Ma ain't going to be there; and the old dowager that's going to look after us is blind and deaf and lame, so she won't bother us much. Where are you going, anyhow?"

"To the Adirondacks," said Zandy, not quite equal to telling her questioner that it was none of her business where she was going.

"Oh, good fathers! what fun. Who's up there?—going to join a party, ain't you?"

"My brother and cousin, and their tutor are there."

"Larks! Camping out is *such* fun! I told ma and pa the other day, that I was bound to go on some such spree next season, and they might just make up their paternal minds to it. I want a nice party, though; I ain't going poking through the woods with a lot of relations. How old is your brother?"

"Sixteen."

"That all? How old's your cousin?"

"Seventeen."

"Their tutor a young man?"

"Not very."

"Are you older than your brother?"

"I am the same age."

"Twins, hey? how droll! I'm seventeen, and Floss is 'most nineteen, though I'm generally taken for the oldest; people say I have a mature expression. And no wonder, for I've been through no end. I was engaged last year; he was awful handsome, but ma broke it off cause he wasn't of a good fam'ly, and it 'most killed me. I had a *love* of a ring—a cluster of nine

diamonds; I did *hate* to give it back. But la, I'm all over it now—had half a dozen chances a'ready. I don't mean to get engaged though, *for good*, anyhow—for a year or two yet; it's such fun to catch 'em and keep 'em dangling; don't you think so? Come, tell me some of *your* love affairs. When I take a fancy to a girl I always run on, just this way. A'int you been in love yet?"

"No," replied Zandy, in a tone of intense disgust.

"Don't your ma, or your grandma—whichever it is—approve of it?" asked the girl, scornfully.

"No, and I don't, either."

"Oh, the lands! what poky times you must have. Well, I'll go and look after Floss and Cousin Morry awhile;"—and she flirted her ruffles and ribbons across the car, and informed her sister and cousin that the girl was an odious little prig, and she might go to Jerusalem, for all of her.

Everybody grew silent as the summer twilight came on, and deepened into darkness, and the car-lamps were lighted, and poor Zandy became possessed of a new feeling. She had been elated, discouraged, frightened, angry, disgusted, and now she was desolate and home-sick—too desolate for tears. She could only lean her head wearily against the window, gazing out into the night, and think how lonely she was, and realize that she was being plunged on through the darkness, farther and farther from home, with no human being near, except Rachel, who even knew her name, or who could let her friends know if anything happened to her. When should she see any of them again? Would they start as soon as they got the letter—the letter? She had meant to leave it with Carrie to send on to her grandfather that day, only meaning to make sure of going herself.

Her heart nearly stood still, as the truth flashed across her for the first time, but she was soon comforted by the thought that she might telegraph to her grandfather from Schenectady or Saratoga.

Once behind the curtains of her section of the sleeping-car, she speedily ceased to hear Rachel's complaints, the cries of children, and even the thunder of the train, and forgot her troubles in profound, dreamless sleep.

She slept until Rachel's voice roused her:

"Miss Zandy, it's time to get up. 'Most all the beds is put away."

"Put away!" repeated Zandy, dreamily, opening her eyes and gazing at Rachel's face, which just came into view over the edge of her berth.

"Yes, an' glad am I to say it, for I hain't fetched a long breath all night. Such a stuffy place I never was in; an' the top of my head is 'most banged to pieces, against the bottom of your berth, Miss Zandy, with starting up to see what the dreadful noises and shakin' was."

"Have we got to—where are we going? My senses are asleep yet, I do believe."

"I'm sure I don't know where we're going, Miss Zandy. All I know is, I wish we was safe to the Addlerondicks an' back ag'in."

"Oh! I remember all about it now—Schenectady first, and then Saratoga. I feel as if I must have been asleep a week, it seems so long since last night—I was so miserable then, and I feel so happy now."

"I don't see how a body's to feel anything else but miserable that's in such a fix. I'm sure *I* can't," said Rachel, with her forehead in a dozen puckers, and her mouth drawn down indefinitely at the corners.

"Rachel, you are a perfect old raven! but you can't croak me into the dumps again. It will only take us a day or two more to get there, and I feel sure Master Dick is getting well, and I shall telegraph to grandpa. I am so glad we came! but I must get up, or *down* rather, so stand from under"—and Zandy jumped lightly from her perch.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, as, meeting several pairs of eyes belonging to people quietly seated on the other side of the car, she quickly drew the curtains before her; "I forgot my hair! Why didn't you tell me, Rachel?"

"You needn't care, Miss; they all had frumpled hair till they'd brushed it. Here's the place to wash, back here, an' a hateful little hole it is; it just made me sea-sick a standin' there."

Zandy put her veil over her head, and followed Rachel; but some one was there before her, and it proved to be a lady whose pleasant smile she had met the previous night. She said "Good morning" to Zandy, and asked if she had slept well.

"O yes," replied Zandy. "I never slept so soundly, I think. I didn't even dream, and when Rachel waked me, I couldn't remember where I was, for a minute."

The lady glanced at Rachel, and said: "Are you used to travelling alone, with only Rachel to take care of you?"

"Oh," said Zandy, with a little laugh, "Rachel doesn't take care of me; I take care of her, don't I, Rachel? And she doesn't appreciate the privilege of travelling with me at all."

"Then it isn't a new experience for you?" said the lady.

"Oh, indeed it is," cried Zandy. "I never went even from Oxley to Scoville alone before."

"I thought last night that you had friends with you, or I should have taken you under my wing, as I should wish some motherly person to do by a daughter of mine, under such circumstances; and when I found that you were alone, I felt quite concerned about you; so I am very glad to find you safe and well this morning."

"You are very kind," said Zandy, gratefully.

"I must leave you now," said the lady; "but I shall see you again, I hope."

When Zandy and Rachel went back to their section, the berths had dissappeared; so they sat down, and presently the lady came and sat down beside Zandy.

"Are you going farther than Saratoga?" she asked.

"Yes, as far as Saranac," Zandy replied, blushing.

"Are you going to the *Adirondacks* with Rachel, and no one else?"

"Is it such a great way, and so very hard to get there?" asked Zandy, her courage beginning to tremble a little.

"Oh no; it is neither a very long, or a very difficult journey," replied the lady, reassuringly.

"But tell me how it is that you are going to the *Adirondacks*, not quite knowing the way, and with Rachel to take care of, and nobody to take care of you. Are you going to join friends there?"

"Yes—my brother and cousin and their tutor are there."

"Oh, well," said the lady, looking relieved. "You will be quite safe, then, when you get to Saranac. But will they not meet you? Are they not expecting you?"

"No; they have no idea that I am coming," said Zandy, her cheeks growing very hot.

"Are they at the hotel at Saranac?—are you sure of that?"

"I know they are not; they are in the woods somewhere, not very far from Saranac—I don't know just where."

"Were you sent on to join them on such uncertainties?" asked the lady, wondering what sort of a mother the poor child had.

"I wasn't sent at all," said Zandy; and then she broke suddenly and bravely into a full account of her undertaking, leaving nothing untold, even to being determined to go, whether it was right or not, and her fears of the night before that she might come to grief, because of that determination.

"I can't help being glad that I came, now that last night is over, for I wish so much to take care of Dick."

"If you only had asked leave, and if some one had come with

you who could take care of you, and help to take care of your brother," said the lady, gravely.

She would not have thought it right to let Zandy know how her daring so much for love of her brother, and the brave, truthful spirit that shone out in every look and word, won upon her heart, and thrilled her with sympathy. It certainly was not a thing to be encouraged—such independence of authority, in one so young.

"They never would have let me come," said Zandy, "even with some one else; and you don't know, you can't possibly imagine how much I wished to be with Dick now; and if I couldn't have gone, and Dick hadn't got well—"

Zandy had kept the thought of danger to Dick out of her mind as much as possible; and in the strangeness of the adventure and the turmoil of contending feelings, she had not found it very difficult. But now she had given expression to the terrible possibility, and all that it implied rushed upon her with a sharpness that upset her self-control, and she cried heartily for a few minutes.

Her new friend sat silent a little while, thinking it was better that she should have her cry then, than when she was alone with Rachel. By-and-by, she said gently: "Don't cry any more, my child. I do not doubt in the least that you will get safely to your brother, and that you will find him getting well. Can't you look upon me as a prophet, and trust my happy presentiment?"

Zandy smiled through her tears, and said she thought she could; and then she was obliged to make haste to wipe away the tears, for they were at Schenectady, and the lady's son joined them.

The telegram was sent, and then Zandy felt quite at ease and greatly enjoyed the ride from Schenectady to Saratoga, and the breakfast with Mrs. Lowe—that was her new friend's name—almost forgetting that she had, at least, one lonely day before her. She found that the son was an artist, and was going, with his mother for company, to sketch among the lakes and mountains.

"Shall I never see you again?" asked Zandy, tearfully, as they stood by the seats her friend had selected for her in the train for Whitehall.

"Indeed, I hope so, my dear. I should feel sadder than I do, even, at parting with you, if I thought you would not. You have promised to write as soon as you are safe with your brother, and here is my address in New-York. If you are there next winter, you must be sure to come and see me."

"Indeed I shall," said Zandy.

"And here is something that you will find comforting, about one o'clock—that is, its contents—and when you have emptied it you can keep it to remember us by;" and Mrs. Lowe handed Zandy a pretty luncheon basket, well stored, as its weight testified.

Zandy both looked and spoke her thanks, and presently the bell rang, and the good-bys were said, and Zandy was alone with Rachel once more. She sat down, feeling very lonely and dejected; but her interest in her fellow-travellers, the scenery, and pleasant thoughts of her new friends, the Lowes, made the ride to Whitehall seem very short; and she said as much to Rachel, when the train stopped, but found her of a different opinion.

"It's dreadful, Miss Zandy, all these changes from cars to more cars, and cars to boats."

"Yes, and boats to stages, and, like enough, stages to canoes, and I shouldn't wonder if we have to walk at last!" said Zandy, gayly.

"Oh, dear suz! Miss Zandy, I can't help wishin' we was safe to home."

"Don't wish any wishes for me, if you please, Rachel, except that the cars and boats and stages and canoes may take me safely to the end of my journey."

The conductor had told them to wait till he came for them, and now he appeared and hurried them to the boat, which started as soon as the passengers from the cars were on board.

Zandy and Rachel sat for a time in the saloon, and then Zandy ventured out on deck. She was dismayed by the many strange faces, and was on the point of going back, when a voice close by said, "Here is a chair—see; sit right down."

Zandy looked, and saw a bright, energetic-looking woman, and a slight, pale young man, both of whom she had noticed on the train.

"I had rather not take your seat," Zandy said, seeing that the lady was unfolding a three-legged camp-stool for herself.

Oh, I like this little affair; we are old friends, but there's a chair, over there, and for the sake of making you comfortable in yours, I'll go and get it."

She strode across the deck, and brought the chair dexterously by one leg over the intervening heads, and seated herself by Zandy, saying, "There now! are you satisfied? Will your maid of the cheerful countenance provide herself a seat?" she added, as Rachel stood forlornly in the doorway.

"I'll go inside, Miss Zandy; I like it better in there," said Rachel.

"Do you know," said the lady, "I have been frightfully curious about you? Do just tell me a few facts: where are you going, and why you are travelling alone with that despairing female? Is it a matter of choice, or dire necessity, that brings you here in such company?"

Zandy smiled, as she saw her questioner settle herself to listen, with her arms crossed upon her knees.

"It is choice, because nobody sent me, or even advised me to come; and it is necessity, too, because I had a good reason for doing it."

"I am positive you are a girl after my own heart! but you haven't allayed my curiosity—only whetted it. Tell me what your good reason was—there's a jewel."

"My brother is ill, among the mountains."

"And you are going to him?"

"Yes."

"You said nobody sent you, or advised you to go: did anybody object to your coming?" Of course your mother approved of it?"

"My mother—I have no mother," said Zandy, with trembling lips.

"Do forgive me! what a brute I am!"

The lady was silent a moment, looking deprecatingly at Zandy, and then said gently, "I can't ask you any more questions, for fear I should hurt you again—only this: Did you—run away?"

She spoke the last words in a whisper, with her hands each side of her mouth, and Zandy answered, "Yes, I ran away!" also in a whisper, laughing heartily at the funny assumption of secrecy.

"Give us your hand, my girl! I'm proud of you! You are an honor to your sex. It is a relief to meet an exception to the silly, namby-pamby girls of this degenerate day."

"I am not proud of what I have done," said Zandy. "I was at first, but I am not now. I am only glad I came because I am so anxious to be with my brother while he is ill. I didn't suppose anybody could think it proper for me to start off so with Rachel, and without leave."

"Proper! I think it's proper for every soul of man and woman to do exactly what his or her conscience dictates, if it's to be a judge, or sweep the streets; sew shirts or be a queen."

"I shouldn't think *conscience* had much to with it," said Zandy; "I am sure it hadn't with my going to Dick."

"Yes, it had. Whatever impels us to do a thing at all hazards, is conscience; and, unless in the case of one whose nature is all perverted and distorted, it is right to follow that impulsion. Some people haven't force enough to be impelled to do anything;—how I do despise such weak souls!"

"I thought conscience was the small voice that had to be listened for carefully; and that *inclination* was what impels us to do things at all hazards. I am afraid if I had listened to what my conscience had to say to me, I should have stayed at home, and sent the letter to grandpapa."

"I dare say! that's just it! you live with your grandparents?"

"Yes."

"And they were away from home when the letter came telling of your brother's illness."

"Yes."

"I am glad they were, so that you could do as you liked! Now, if you had waited for that small voice you talk about, fear of consequences and sense of propriety would have trumped up all manner of objections, and you would have behaved like other stupid girls, instead of acting upon the generous, free impulse of a noble heart, and taking a risk for one you love—a *moral* as well as a physical risk, I mean. People potter about right and wrong, until they can't tell one from the other. They make the verdict of their fellow-creatures on their actions their conscience, instead of trusting to heaven-born instincts. Don't you let any amount of blame make you think you have done wrong in this thing. Where is your brother?"

"He is somewhere near Saranac Lake. I shall find out at Saranac how to get to him."

"Now, listen to me! I know this region like a book; I am willing to bet my head that I know as much about it as any man alive, even those who were born and bred here; and I will be your guide. I am a bit of a doctor, too; and I will take you to your brother, and see what is the matter with him, and, if you like, I will help you to take care of him. What do you say?"

"I don't know what to say," exclaimed Zandy.

"You needn't be afraid to tell me, if you don't want me. I dare say I have horrified you with my ranting. I *can* be gentle to sick people, though."

"You didn't let me finish," said Zandy, earnestly. "I meant to say that I was so relieved and glad to think you could go with me. I haven't dared to think much about getting from Port Kent to Dick."

"Well, you needn't bother your little head about it now, for I know every man, woman and child, and every inch of ground around Saranac. We will spend to-morrow night at the nice house at this end of the lake and take a fresh start for the woods in the morning."

"O dear!" said Zandy, "must it be two days and two nights before I can see Dick? I thought I should surely see him to-morrow."

"Well, we'll see. There's a full moon, and perhaps we can do better than that. We can't get there before to-morrow night, though—that's certain. Hammy!" she exclaimed, suddenly addressing her quiet companion, "draw up here, and let me introduce you to a new friend I've found. This is my brother, Hamilton Forbes, Miss—what shall I say?"

"Zandy Craighead," said Zandy, bowing as Mr. Forbes lifted his hat.

"I am known as *Lilly* Forbes, to the world in general—as Leo, to the select few who know how ill-assorted that name and I are. My poor, deluded mamma gave me that soft, sweet name in my unsuggestive infancy, fondly dreaming that my nature would match it; and lo! what a savage I turned out! Hammy, now, is a comfort to our parents—dear old boy! I take him with me always to the mountains—not for the sake of propriety, Miss Zandy—is that your real name?"

"No; Alexandra."

—"But because he is such good company—carries my traps while I carry the canoe, loads one gun while I shoot the other, and baits my hooks, and doesn't talk and make a noise, and scare away the game and fish. Nice boy, is my Hammy!"—and Miss Forbes gave her brother an affectionate slap on the shoulder, which he answered with a pleasant smile, and Zandy began to wonder if he ever talked.

His sister certainly talked enough for both, and so entertainingly, about her adventures among the mountains, and of the people and animals she had met there, that the day passed very quickly to Zandy.

Miss Forbes had a luncheon-basket, too, and there was plenty in Zandy's for herself and Rachel; so they ate comfortably, in their quiet corner of the deck.

At Port Kent they left the boat, and the stage took them to a place where they spent the night, and then started in the early morning for Saranac.

Zandy thought the day could never come to an end; but Miss Forbes was determined that it should not seem long, and to that effect exerted herself very successfully. She was equally

determined that, if she could compass it, Zandy should see Dick that night, and to that end she left Zandy to her brother's mild entertainment, as soon as they reached the hotel, and went in search of information.

She found that Dick's illness was the occasion of much concern among the people of the house, and the visitors; that he had been worse for a day or two, and that that day the tutor had telegraphed to his friends; also, that he was at a house some ten miles down the lake.

After making all necessary arrangements, she went back to Zandy: "Well, little friend," she said, in her cheerfulest tones, "tea will be ready in half an hour, and then we shall be ready for a ten-mile row down the lake by moonlight—that is, unless you object!"

"Am I to see Dick to-night?"

"Yes—that is, I propose to have you sleep under the same small roof. But he may be asleep himself when you get there, and in that case you may not get a word from him till morning."

"Have you heard how he is?" asked Zandy, anxiously.

"Yes, of course I have. He isn't well yet, so that we shan't have all our pains for nothing; we shall have a chance to nurse him and pet him a little before he goes hunting and fishing again."

"I do feel so glad to be with you," said Zandy, laying her hand on Miss Forbes's. "I can't tell you half how glad I am."

"I wouldn't have you try, for anything," Miss Forbes replied, taking the little hand in both her strong brown ones. "I am fully as glad as you are; I'm sure of that," she added, with a smile that made her plain face beautiful in Zandy's eyes.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN THE WILDERNESS.

AFTER supper Zandy's trunk was unpacked, under Miss Forbes's directions, to get a few necessary things to take with them; and it occasioned a deal of merriment—partly at Rachel's expense, for having brought all Zandy's "best bibs and tuckers," as Miss Forbes said—and partly at Zandy's when the bottles, and the large-sized dressing-gown and slippers came to light.

"The cologne and the camphor we will take; but the other drugs I should like to throw into the lake. My medical theory and practice, are—no medicine, plenty of nursing. The dressing-gown and slippers may come in play after a few days; but there is more room for storage here than at Tom's, so we will leave them till called for."

Rachel was greatly distressed at not taking the trunk, and indignant at Miss Forbes for insisting that what Zandy could carry in her bag was all that could be thought of.

"Just wait till you have seen the boat we are to go in, my good woman, and see then what you think about taking a trunk."

"I expect nothin' but what we'll be drownt, every one of us. I'm mortal feared of the water,"—and Rachel heaved a dismal sigh.

"We had better leave her here," said Miss Forbes to Zandy; "I really think so; she will be a perfect nuisance, with her fears and whims, and of no use."

"Well—if you think it best, and are sure that she will be comfortable," said Zandy, sorry that her old nurse should have done herself so little credit as a traveller.

"I will see to that. So now, Rachel, you may settle yourself in this room, and make yourself as happy as in you lies, which I fear isn't saying much, and we will communicate with you in a day or two."

Rachel was deeply hurt at being so easily dispensed with; but her feelings were, after all, less to her than her safety, and her affection for Dick was not stronger than her terror of the water; so she went down to see them off in tolerably good spirits.

"Isn't your brother going?" asked Zandy, when she and Miss Forbes were nicely balanced in the shell-like boat.

"No, indeed; there is no room for him at Tom's. What do you think *now* of the trunk arrangement, Rachel?"

"It's a good thing I gave up goin'," said Rachel, with a face full of horror. "I'd have lost my wits afore I got on land again, I know."

"Good-by, Hammy. Take care of yourself," called Miss Forbes; and after heading her boat up the lake, two or three of her strong, steady strokes carried them far out from the shore.

"Can you really row ten miles without getting tired out?" asked Zandy. "I didn't imagine a woman could ever do such things."

"One of the approved and generally admired sort couldn't. But I'm not a delicate exotic, as you may have discovered. You would hardly believe me, I dare say, if I should tell you how much I did up here in one day, once. Poor little Hammy was completely used up, and had to lie by for a day; but I was just respectably tired, and enjoyed my hemlock bed amazingly."

Zandy watched her friend admiringly, as she bent forward and back with a free, generous motion, giving long, steady strokes that sent the boat swiftly through the water.

Miss Forbes would not press Zandy, when she found her disinclined to talk, so long as the sunset glow lingered on the mountains. She let her have her thoughts to herself and silently enjoy the beauty of the scene, or dreamily watch the wide, bright eddies the oars made in the crimsoned waters. But when the glow departed, and the shadows deepened, and the moon cast its first pale light down the mountains and across the lake, she began to talk in her liveliest fashion, and effectually changed the current of Zandy's thoughts. She was not allowed to see any of the exquisite but weird effects of moonlight and shadow, without the accompaniment of cheerful human tones. And, indeed, the hour after nightfall would have been a very sober and apprehensive one to Zandy, if there had been nothing more cheerful and real than the solemn mountains, towering to the sky in all their strange shapes and outlines, the distant cries of owls and loons and wolves, and the tremulous, silvery light, the regular plashing of the oars, and the tinkle of their dripping spray as it fell back upon the glittering ripples. As it was, the hour passed quickly and pleasantly. Miss Forbes's occasional reference to Dick, and what they would do for him, prevented a sudden thought of him from causing a pang.

"Here we are!" Miss Forbes cried, as she made towards

the land, at a point where a little cove dented the shore, and where dense woods lay between two high precipitous hills.

"Aren't you afraid?" asked Zandy, almost in a whisper, when the moon, dropping behind one of the hills, as they drew nearer, left the woods in black shadow.

"Afraid! not a bit of it; what is there to be afraid of!"

"The darkness," said Zandy. "I think it looks terrific."

"No such thing! it looks as friendly and nice as can be!" cried Miss Forbes gayly, springing from the boat; and seizing the bow, she drew it upon the pebbly shore, and helped Zandy out.

"Here we are, and here we go! Give me that bag, and give me your hand too, and don't think there's anything to be afraid of—the very idea! Darkness among the mountains and woods is holy, like the sky from which it falls to fold them for the night. It is grand, too, with a pleasant touch of mystery, as all Nature's grandeurs have. In cities, darkness is a thing to fear."

"Is it far to where Dick is?" asked Zandy, as Miss Forbes led her on through the dim wood-path.

"Not very—a few minutes' walk. If I had supposed the moon would serve us such a shabby trick, as to hide herself when we needed her light the most, I should have brought a lantern for your sake, my dear. I dare say it seems as if the trees were all going to run against you and bump your nose, doesn't it?"

"It did at first, but I'm getting used to the darkness now."

Pretty soon a light appeared in the distance, which Miss Forbes said was in Tom's cottage, and in a few minutes more they stood at the door. Zandy clung, with a nervous grasp, to her friend's hand, and trembled with excitement.

"I don't hear so much as a mouse stirring," said Miss Forbes lightly, as she listened a moment. "I do believe they are all asleep, and I don't care to waken everybody; so I'll just go in and see what I can see. Sit down on the step, dear, and I'll be back in a trice."

Miss Forbes opened the door a little, and called softly: "Mr. McLane! Tom! hello there!"

"Who's there?" asked a man's voice from within, and a slight shuffling was heard.

"It's I. Miss Forbes, Tom. Can I come in?"

"Do tell!" exclaimed the voice in astonished accents. "'Tain't possible?"

"Yes it is, Tom," said Miss Forbes, holding out her hand, as Tom opened the door and stared at her with wondering eyes.

"Why shouldn't it be? Haven't I been here times enough to make it likely that I should come again?"

She partly closed the door as she went in, so that Zandy might not hear more than she ought.

"But who'd a thought o' your comin' at nigh on the dead o' night? *That's* what beats me."

"I had a good reason for coming at this unearthly hour, Tom, as you will find."

"I'm dreadful glad you've come!" said Tom, eagerly, his surprise giving place to a new idea. "Mebbe you didn't know as how there's a young man sick here?"

"Yes, I did. That is just what brought me."

"Don't say! Be you his aunt, or something? How did you hear on't?—it beats me!"

"No, I am no relation, Tom, I don't know him, even; I heard by chance, and came. Who is that?" she asked, pointing towards a little bed in one corner.

"That's his cousin; him an' his teacher takes turns watchin', an' I was a settin' here, nappin' in my cheer, in case I was wanted for anything, he's so bad to-night. I do say for't, Miss Forbes, ther' ain't nobody I'd sooner a' hed come to see arter him than you, relation or no relation."

"Thank you, Tom. The boy's young sister is at the door—has travelled night and day to get to him."

"Do tell! bless her tender heart—I'm afeard it's got to ache mighty bad, if she's so sot on him as all that comes to," said Tom, drawing the back of his hand across his eyes.

"Hush, Tom! he isn't going to die," whispered Miss Forbes, with a feeling of rebellion at the thought of Zandy's having such a trial before her. "We mustn't keep her out there by herself any longer; tell me if you can give her anything like a comfortable resting-place. I know you must be crowded already; but the poor child will be ill herself, unless she has rest."

"That's so," said Tom, "an' though we are about as chock full as we can be, in course we must squeeze together, and make room for you and the sister."

"Never mind me, Tom. I am going to take care of the boy, for my part; but a place for the little girl we must have."

"I'll just speak to Marthy about it," said Tom, going into the back room.

Miss Forbes looked about on the familiar homeliness of the room she was in, which served as parlor, kitchen and dining-room, and as her eyes rested on a closed door, and she was thinking, "I suppose Dick is in there," it was opened by a young man with a pitcher in his hand.

He started at seeing a stranger, and said, "I beg pardon—I thought Mr. McLane was here."

"You want some fresh water, don't you?"

"Yes; I was going to ask Mr. McLane to get it for me."

"Give me the pitcher. I will get it. Is your patient asleep?"

"Yes, he sleeps most of the time now," answered Stephen with a wondering look at the new-comer; and then a slight noise at the outside door, which was very near Dick's room, caught his ear, and he was on the point of going to see what it was, when Miss Forbes interposed.

"I will attend to that. Go to your patient, please, and let me shut you in. I'll bring the water in a minute."

Smiling at his astonishment, she held the door open long enough to get a glimpse of Dick's white face, and shut it quickly, as Zandy's widely-dilated eyes met hers.

"Come in—come in, dear! Did you think I never was going to let you in?"

"Have you seen him?" asked Zandy, with quivering lips.

"Just had one look at him while I spoke to Mr. Hollister—I suppose it was he. I was afraid you might burst in, like a little crazy ghost, and frighten your brother; so I shut them up. See, there is your cousin, fast asleep—don't care for him, eh? then come with me, while I get some fresh water for Dick?"

She caught Zandy's hand, as she saw her eyes were fixed on Dick's door, and hurried her away, nearly running against Tom, who was coming back from consulting with his wife.

"We were going for some water, Tom; now you can get it," said Miss Forbes, drawing Zandy into the back room, where Martha was making up the bed. "How do you do, Martha? I am right glad to see you once more, and I hope you are not sorry to see me."

"Not a bit! there's nobody I'd sooner a' seen this night than you, 'less it was the young gentleman's own folks."

"This is his sister, and we are going to make him well in no time," said Miss Forbes, with a warning look at Martha.

"I'm going to let the young lady hev my bed—poor dear! She must be dreadful tired," said Martha, pityingly.

"I don't want you to give up your bed for me," exclaimed Zandy. "I would much rather sit up; do let me," she begged, as Miss Forbes shook her head.

"It would never do. You must have—oh, here's the water. Give it to me, Tom; I'll take it to Mr. Hollister. Come along, Zandy, but stand out of sight, there's a darling. You wouldn't like to take your brother by surprise, when it would be so bad for him."

Zandy stood on one side, and Miss Forbes opened the door.

"He seems to be asleep still," she said cheerfully, as Stephen took the pitcher. "Is he rational when he wakes?"

"Wandering—generally," was the reply.

Miss Forbes laid her hand lightly on Dick's hot forehead, and felt his faint, quick pulse.

"I think you may leave him to me while he sleeps," she said. "There is a friend of his out there who would like to see you;" and she added in a whisper, "be careful what you say to her—don't frighten her; she has borne a great deal, and needs comforting. Shut the door after you."

Stephen obeyed, with a sense of relief from responsibility that was very pleasant. As he closed the door, his eyes fell upon Zandy, who stood pale and trembling just outside; and his astonishment was so great that for a moment he forgot to speak to her. As for Zandy herself, the sight of Mr. Hollister, coming from Dick's room, was just enough to break down her well-trying endurance; and burying her face in her hands, she sank upon the floor, and burst into loud sobs.

"This will never do," said Miss Forbes, coming out quickly, and closing the door. "Go to Dick, while I attend to this poor child," she said to Stephen, who stood by, doing nothing but wonder how Zandy came there; and lifting her in her strong arms, she carried her to Martha's bed, letting her relieve the tension of her excited nerves in tears while she sat by, stroking her hair and saying soothing things.

"When can I see Dick?" asked Zandy, at length, as her sobs gradually ceased.

"Not to-night—dear me, no! He is asleep, and I am going to undress you and put you to bed, as if you were a baby; and to-morrow morning—if you behave well now, and when you wake up, you shall see Dick."

"Is he—*very* ill?"

"How can I tell just how ill he is, when you made such an ado as soon as ever I got into this room? I'll warrant he *would* have been very ill, if I hadn't hustled you away as I did. Now listen to me"—and Miss Forbes proceeded to lay down laws for Zandy as her assistant nurse, and set forth the various things she intended to do for Dick's comfort, giving Zandy such a feeling of confidence in her skill, that when she was fairly in bed, she dropped asleep while Martha was telling her that she needn't mind the two little boys on the floor, behind the clothes-horse with the quilt over it, for they would be out of the way long before she was awake.

Martha and Tom had a great deal to say to Miss Forbes of

Dick's sufferings, and their anxiety for him, and of the devotion of the two young gentlemen. The doctor was gone from the hotel, but he had been there the day before, and left medicines, though he said careful nursing was the great thing.

"Ef another doctor comes along," Tom said, "they promised to send him up right off."

"Heaven forbid!" said Miss Forbes. "This man was homœopathic, and the next might be allopathic; and between them, the poor boy would stand a poor chance. If it is presumption, I hope I may be forgiven; but I feel sure that I can do as well for him as the best of doctors."

"The young gentleman sent a telegraph to his grandfather to-day?"

"Yes; but they can't get here till Wednesday;—what day was the boy taken ill?"

"A week ago, an' more. I can't rightly tell what day, this minute."

"The fever will have turned, then, in all probability, when his friends get here."

"May the good Lord let it turn the way we'd have it," said Martha, fervently.

"Amen!" responded Miss Forbes.

She went to the door of Dick's room, and having knocked, opened it, and went in.

"I'll take my turn now," she said to Stephen, having seen that Dick still lay in a stupor, or heavy sleep. "You look, decidedly, as if a little sleep wouldn't come amiss to you."

"What do you think of him? You know more than the rest of us—I feel sure of that."

"I can tell better after I have been with him a little while. He seems very ill, but I have seen my brother safely through such a dreadful attack of fever, one that this case seems to me to resemble, that I feel very hopeful about Dick. Now you must get some sleep, or I shall have you on my hands, besides."

"Tell me, first, how Miss Craighead got here. Who came with her?"

"A dismal dolt of a woman, named Rachel."

"Who else?"

"Nobody."

"You can't mean it!"

"I do mean it. She got your letter to her grandfather the day after the family had gone to the Springs, and started within a few hours of Rachel—borrowed money, left a friend to keep house, and came asking the way step by step."

"Extraordinary! Where did you fall in with her? You are a friend of the family, I suppose?"

"No, I am a stranger to them all. I was attracted by the child's sweet, spirited face, and simple, girlish manner—on the train, coming from Saratoga, I saw her first—and then by her most unique story; and if ever I was thankful in my life, it is for the chance, luck, providence—whatever it was, that put me in her way."

"If you are so thankful, what must we all be?" said Stephen, rejoicing more than he could have expressed, in that kindly, trust-inspiring presence, and watching while she bent to moisten Dick's lips, and smooth the pillows.

"Where can you lie down?" she said, turning again to Stephen.

"I shall find a place," he replied, and was soon fast asleep in the narrow half of Royal's bed; while Miss Forbes kept watch beside Dick, tending him with her woman's wisdom and tact, added to the good will of his other nurses.

Tom and Martha, with minds more at ease than they had been for days, wrapped themselves in blankets, and slept soundly on the floor.

Zandy woke the next morning to find the slant sunbeams, and the dancing shadows of many leaves, lying across her bed; and quickly collecting her senses, bewildered at first by the strangeness of her surroundings, she dressed in a flutter of haste, finding various tokens of Miss Forbes's thoughtfulness at different stages of her toilet.

The front room was empty, but she heard voices outside, and so bestowed but a glance upon the asparagus in the fire-place, the gay bouquets on the mantel, the spotless floor, and the breakfast-table with one plate and knife and fork, plainly waiting for her. No sooner did she appear at the open door than she was seized by Royal, who had heard the story of her arrival and her journey, and had been nearly beside himself with impatience for the last two hours, threatening a dozen times to waken her. Mr. Hollister declared that the sight of her, the night before, had been too much for his dilapidated wits; but he had shown his appreciation of her daring by dreaming of nothing but her possible and impossible exploits.

"I'd like to shake hands, too," said Tom, offering his broad, hard palm to Zandy, and pulling off his hat. "I'm glad you come, an' you are right welcome to our bit of a house."

Martha came to say good-morning just then, and to tell Zandy that her breakfast was ready. Dick had been in her thoughts every instant, and she had been wondering all the time

why Miss Forbes did not come to tell her how he was, and take her to see him. She went in with Martha, followed by Royal and Stephen, and as she reached Dick's door, before anybody could say a word, she had opened it and stood beside the bed. Miss Forbes had intended that she should have her breakfast first, and that Dick should be awake and informed of her coming; but there she was, and Miss Forbes kissed her, and called her a naughty girl for stealing the march upon her in that style, while Zandy saw only Dick's wasted face and parched lips.

The great tears fell fast, and she was in danger of crying out with pain and fear, he looked so much worse than she had expected.

"Don't wake him up now," said Miss Forbes lightly;—"I won't have that. He is going to begin to get well to-day,—I feel it! You might kiss him, if you weren't crying, but those big hot tears would be sure to disturb him."

Zandy wiped her eyes, and with a great effort choked back her rising sobs, and then kissed her brother's burning cheeks and hands.

"Now come and get your breakfast," said Miss Forbes, seeing how Zandy trembled.

"I don't want any. Do let me stay here."

"You shall come back, but you must eat. Why, the idea of expecting to help me take care of Dick without eating! I wouldn't trust you alone with him a second. Nobody has any sense that doesn't eat, and a good deal, too. You should have seen the breakfast I ate! My good appetite accounts, almost wholly, for my superior wisdom! Sit right down here. Martha, pour some milk for this child. Mr. Hollister, give her some of that delicious trout and those fried potatoes; Royal, pass her the bread and butter; and every one of you attend to her, and lay yourselves out to entertain her, and let me go back to my patient; if she behaves well, and eats all you give her, she may sit with Dick while I take a run in the woods; and if she doesn't, she will have to be shut up in the closet, and not see Dick again to-day."

The next three days were very anxious and sad ones, in spite of Miss Forbes's efforts to keep cheerful herself, and make every one else so. There was no perceptible change in Dick's symptoms, and the weak pulse, and continued stupor were very discouraging.

A message came on Monday saying that Mr. and Mrs. Craighead had started that morning for Saranac, so that they might be expected on Wednesday; but Miss Forbes thought of their coming with painful misgivings. She never left Dick's room

by day or night, except to eat her hurried meals, until Tuesday afternoon, when she was persuaded to lie down for an hour, and let Zandy and Mr. Hollister keep watch.

Stephen sat by the window, and Zandy, by the bed, listened to Dick's unquiet breathing, and never took her eyes from his face. He had not noticed her yet, though she had been by his side more than once when he had seemed conscious for a moment; and so now she was completely surprised and not a little startled when, after a restless movement of his head and hands, he opened his eyes full upon her, and said faintly, "Zandy, is that you?"

"Yes, darling," she replied, bending over him; "can I do anything for you?"

"No."

Dick turned his face away, and Zandy stood motionless, longing for another word, but not daring to speak. In a minute or two he turned to her again: "Am I going to get well?" he asked, with anxiety in his great hollow eyes.

"Yes, darling, of course you are," Zandy answered, her heart in her throat.

"Are you sure?—who said so?"

"Miss Forbes thinks so—I know she does—we all do;—of course we do," said Zandy earnestly, trying to assure herself of the truth of her assertion, though nearly paralyzed with dread.

"Zandy," said Dick, more faintly than before, "could you pray?"

"I don't know—I am afraid not;—I will try, dear," faltered Zandy, while Dick's eyes eagerly watched her face.

"Now—now Zandy. Won't you pray that I may get well?"

Dick's tones were pleading and reproachful, and Zandy would willingly have died herself, she thought, the next moment, if she could have kneeled down beside him and offered the kind of prayer he needed to hear.

She started to kneel, in her desperation, but stopped and cast an imploring look at Stephen. He shook his head gloomily, and with one glance at Dick, who was still watching her, she ran from the room to Miss Forbes, who was asleep on Martha's bed.

"Wake up!" she cried, catching her hand. "Do, do wake up, and come to Dick."

"What is it? is anything the matter?" asked Miss Forbes, springing to her feet.

"Come quick, and pray. Dick asked me to, and I couldn't, and you must," cried Zandy in frantic haste.

"I can't either, Zandy—that is in words;—every wish is a

prayer, you know," but seeing Zandy's look of despair, she added, "but Martha can, dear child. She has faith enough to move mountains."

She hurried to the woodshed, where Martha was busy washing dishes:

"Come this instant, Martha, and kneel down beside Dick and pray"—

"That he may get well," interrupted Zandy.

Martha did not quite comprehend the sudden summons.

"Is he worse?" she asked anxiously.

"No, but he wants somebody to pray, and you must do it," said Miss Forbes, taking the towel and plate from Martha's hands.

"Of course I will. I've been a prayin' for him ever since he was fetched here sick—poor boy. I'll come right off;" and she followed Miss Forbes and Zandy, wiping her hands on her apron as she went.

Stephen was trying to soothe Dick's feverish excitement, so dangerous in his weak condition, and stood aside, as Martha drew near the bed.

"Shall I ask the Lord to make you well, dear?" Martha asked tenderly. "Well, then, you just try to say the words over yourself, arter me."

She kneeled, and from the depths of her simple, loving heart, came a prayer for life and health for the sick boy. It made Miss Forbes feel hopeful, and better able to bear her self-assumed responsibility;—such genuine faith in the power and good-will of the Father could not be in vain, no matter whether it were a faith suited only to the simple and ignorant, or to the wise as well. Stephen thought of his mother's prayers by his own bedside, and felt that her faith and Martha's were the same, and revered it, though it seemed an incomprehensible thing to him.

Zandy, waiting only to be sure that Dick had fallen asleep again, broke from Miss Forbes, and ran out of the house and through the woods till she was out of sight. The idea had come to her, while Martha was praying, that she would try to make herself fit to pray, if Dick should ask her again. She was sure she never could forget the look in Dick's eyes, when she as good as refused his request, and she felt as if to do it again would break her heart.

She sat down on the grass to think about it—to consider what she must do to make herself fit, and speedily became sorely perplexed. It had seemed an easy thing at first, but now she was utterly at a loss. The morning and evening prayers she

had said all her life seemed mere words, and she wondered how she had dared to utter them. She tried to think of verses in the Bible that might help her, and of what her grandmother and Mr. Boyd would be likely to say, if they knew what she was trying to do; but all was confusion and darkness.

Suddenly, in the midst of her fruitless questionings, it flashed across her that something might happen while she was away; and starting up, she ran back to the house as fast as she had come.

"Martha's prayers are better than mine could possibly be," she thought, as she ran; "and if God doesn't answer them, and make Dick well, I shall *never* wish to pray to him."

Miss Forbes left Dick no more that day, and that night no one thought of sleeping. Zandy sat in speechless misery at the foot of the bed, while Miss Forbes tended, untiringly, the little life that remained, and that seemed, at times, to have gone out wholly, so faint were the pulse and the breath, and so pallid and sunken the face. The others sat in the outer room, in solemn, apprehensive silence.

It was towards morning that the change came—the subtle, indefinable change that thrilled the anxious watcher with hope, and made her heart cry gladly, "He will live!"

Her first impulse was to whisper it to poor Zandy; but the second thought was wiser:

"She is too nearly worn out, poor darling, to bear a sudden joy," so she placed a pillow under Zandy's drooping head, as she sat with her elbow on the bed, and her chin resting in her hand, her aching eyes fixed upon her brother's face.

"Dick is more comfortable now, dear, and you may as well rest a little. You can look at him all the same," she added, as Zandy made an impatient objection. "Just lean back a bit—so; now you can see that I take good care of him, and not get so dreadfully tired yourself."

She soon had the satisfaction of seeing the heavy eyes close in sleep, and carried the poor child to bed, where she slept without a change of position until nearly noon of the next day.

CHAPTER XIX.

ROSES HAVE THORNS.

MISS FORBES was on the watch for her waking; and Zandy, greeted almost as soon as her eyes were opened by her cheerful face, began to tell of a dream she had had about going on a long journey with Rachel—"O dear, I remember—it wasn't a dream!" she cried suddenly.

"The trouble is all over, though—bless your dear little heart! Do you think I should be here, looking and feeling so jolly, if Dick wasn't better—going to get well? Not I!—there, no tears! I won't have it! If you please, I'd like a little sleep myself now, and would thank you kindly to get up and dress yourself as soon as ever you can, so that we may have dinner, and I may leave you and Mr. Hollister to look after my boy while I rest. I wouldn't like to meet your grandpa and grandma, looking as like an owl as I do at this present sitting."

"Will they get here to-day?" asked Zandy.

"They may, and then again they mayn't. I shall send a word of advice to them by Royal and Tom, who are going to meet the stage to-night, to the effect that as Dick is out of danger—now! what did I tell you! Well, you *may* cry for two minutes if you want to."

Zandy had buried her face in the pillow, and Miss Forbes stroked her bright hair while she went on:

"They will be very tired, of course, and it will be altogether better for them to have a good night's rest, and come up in the morning. What does your little ladyship think about it?"

"I think it's the best plan," said Zandy, drying her eyes. "I want to see Dick right away," she added, proceeding with her dressing. "I must be with him every single minute now, till grandpa and grandma come."

"Why? you don't suppose they are going to shut you up, or punish you for coming, do you?" asked Miss Forbes, laughing, but indignant, too, at the bare idea of anybody's daring to blame Zandy.

"No, but I just feel—I only—well, I *do* think it would be nice—yes, *lovely!* if you and I could take all the care of him

till he gets well, I shan't wish to see even grandma doing *anything* for him."

"Well, we won't borrow trouble," said Miss Forbes, greatly entertained by Zandy's outburst, and fully entering into her feeling. "We will have a good time to-day, nursing and petting Dick, and then we mustn't begrudge your grandmother a little comfort in that line."

Zandy could have sung at the top of her voice all that day, in the joy of her heart, while she sat beside Dick, and Mr. Hollister sat reading within call. But, of course, perfect quiet was enjoined when Miss Forbes left her patient, to take the rest she so much needed; no talking, no moving about—and Zandy was all eagerness to carry out every direction to the letter.

Dick slept most of the time; but his evident satisfaction in Zandy's presence, when he was awake, gave her unspeakable happiness.

Mr. and Mrs. Craighead acted upon Miss Forbes's advice, and spent the night at the end of the lake. The next morning they started, before the sun had taken a look at the lake from the tops of the high hills, and in spite of their impatience to get to Dick, they greatly enjoyed the row on the beautiful lake, in the cool, sweet morning air.

Stephen was waiting at the landing, with cheerful accounts of Dick's continued improvement; and Zandy flew to meet them, forgetful of all but her joy at their coming, as soon as her watchful eyes caught a glimpse of them through the trees.

There was nothing but the tenderest affection in the greeting she received—not the faintest intimation of blame or reproof; though her grandfather shook his head as he watched her child-like manifestations of delight, and thought gravely of her rash undertaking.

Miss Forbes met them at the door, and Zandy looked at her grandmother in momentary amazement to hear her say, in offering her hand to Miss Forbes's warm grasp, "It is fortunate that I need no introduction to my grandson's devoted nurse, as Zandy seems to forget that we have never met before."

Zandy would as soon have thought of introducing herself, or Royal, to her grandmother; Miss Forbes seemed to have belonged to them always.

"You have shown a degree of kindness and generous devotion to our children that puts gratitude to shame," said Mr. Craighead, as he shook her heartily by the hand.

"You would make humanity blush," replied Miss Forbes, "if you were to intimate that I have done more than any respectable human being would have done, under the circum-

stances. You would not think it worth while to be grateful, either, if you knew how much actual *selfishness* had to do with my coming here: it was just to please myself, I assure you; and people deserve no credit for the good they do by chance, in following their inclinations."

"It is a very safe kind of selfishness that leads to giving a week of untiring care to an utter stranger," said Mrs. Craighead, with tears in her eyes.

"I wish there was more such selfishness in the world," added Mr. Craighead.

"I will show you my patient," said Miss Forbes, growing a little embarrassed at being the centre of so much admiring and grateful notice. "You must come in quietly, for he is asleep;—if he sleep, he shall do well, you know."

In the course of the morning Dick was awake and was glad enough to see his grandparents, although, in his weakness, and with the matchless care he had received, he had not thought or anybody, or missed any presence from his bedside. Mrs. Craighead was not in the least jealous at seeing the look of distress in his thin face when Miss Forbes spoke, incidentally, of resigning her post, and leaving her room for others.

"Don't go away," he said, his voice sounding like a plaintive wail; "I can't get well if you do."

"She shall not go, my darling," his grandmother said. "If she can stay a little longer, we shall be only too thankful. I am very willing to be her assistant."

"That is what *I* am," cried Zandy.

"I am going to dismiss you all this minute," said Miss Forbes, who saw, as no one else did, how tired and worried Dick looked. "If I am still to be his nurse, I shall be very tyrannical."

A discussion of plans that day resulted anything but satisfactorily to Zandy. She was very well pleased that Miss Forbes consented to remain with Dick until he was able to be moved; she thought it quite right that her grandfather and Mr. Hollister and Royal should go to the hotel, as there was no place for them to sleep at Tom's, and nothing special for them to do there; she would have submitted with a tolerably good grace to her grandmother's staying behind—it seemed quite a natural arrangement that she should be with Dick, that is, in the same house, though her having any hand in the care of him, she would have considered decidedly superfluous. But what was her dismay when she was told that she herself must go to the hotel with her grandfather!

Her heavy eyes and languid movements had decided her fate;

and the disappointment was more than she could bear with equanimity. She was sitting in the doorway, after dinner, talking with Royal and Stephen, who lounged on the grass near by, when her grandmother came and made known the decision.

"Grandma!" exclaimed Zandy, starting to her feet, "what *can* you mean?"

"I mean, my dear, that you look pale and worn, and that we all think it best for you to leave Dick to Miss Forbes and me, and—"

"I shall not go, grandma! you needn't think it," cried Zandy, vehemently;—"when I came to take care of Dick! and he is just well enough for me to be trusted!—Nobody need speak of my going away, for I will *not*."

"Will not! Zandy," repeated Mrs. Craighead. "You forget yourself. You know that when your grandfather thinks a thing is best—says it must be—you have no right to say you will not do it."

"It is unkind of grandpa," cried Zandy, "and I shall *hate* him if he makes me go!"

"Zandy! I cannot listen to such expressions," exclaimed Mrs. Craighead, sternly; and then added, remembering how much she had been through to try her nerves,—“You are tired out, and don't know what you say. You will only make us all uncomfortable by refusing to do what you must do in the end. You would be ill yourself, very probably, if you were to stay here. Your system is just in the condition to take the fever.”

"I would rather have it, and *die* of it, than not. I am always having to do things that I don't wish to do!" said Zandy, angrily.

"You will acknowledge, when you are in a better temper, Zandy, how unjust your assertion is. There never was a girl who had fewer crosses than you; but that does not matter now;—you will be ready to go with your grandfather, and try to do it cheerfully;" and Mrs. Craighead left her to recover her better self.

"I can't!—I won't!—it is shameful!—it is abominable!—they have no right to make me go!" were Zandy's fiery exclamations, and she stamped her foot and clenched her hands.

"A most ladylike exhibition!" remarked Stephen, getting up from the grass and walking away.

"Never mind, Zandy," said Royal, as Zandy stood motionless, her eyes following Stephen's retreating steps; "I wouldn't care—"

"I *don't* care—I am sure it is nothing to me whether he thinks I am ladylike or not!"

"I mean, I wouldn't care about leaving here," said Royal. "We'll have lots of fun, rowing and fishing; and I'll teach you to shoot at a mark."

"You can't make me willing to go and leave Dick," Zandy declared; "and *nothing* can make me think it anything but hateful in grandpa—if it is ever so *unladylike*!"

"Oh, well! if you are determined to be cross—"

Royal began to whistle, and turned away; and Zandy, left to herself, stood for a while under the shade of the great pines. Their music, sweet as that of an Æolian harp in the gentlest or breezes, might have soothed her angry discontent, if she would have listened to it; but she was only nursing her wrath, and when she entered the house it was with the little toss of her head and sparkle in her eyes, that never meant gentleness or willing submission. She packed her bag, and sat moodily down in the doorway again, taking no notice of anybody or anything.

Presently Mr. Craighead and Tom appeared, armed with fishing-poles and lines, and Mr. Hollister and Royal, equipped for rowing.

"Zandy, are you ready?" asked Mr. Craighead; "it is time we were starting."

"Yes, she is ready," said Royal, as Zandy made no reply and no movement. "Come, Zandy—make the best of it, why can't you? There's no use in moping," he added in a lower tone, sorry to have her appear so unlovely, and ready to make excuses for her.

"Just let me be, Royal. There isn't any 'best' to it, and I hate everything and everybody."

"Dick and Miss Forbes and me, I suppose?"

"No."

"Mr. Hollister?"

"Yes, I *do* hate him."

"What a pity! Your love for your friends is so reliable!—I can't be reconciled to being left out of the happy number," said Stephen, who had come from Dick's room in time to hear his name, and Zandy's declaration.

"My dear," said Mrs. Craighead, coming out to her hastily, "why don't you come and see Dick? He wonders that you stay away, when you are to leave him so soon."

"I didn't suppose he cared," muttered Zandy, rising, and following her grandmother.

Her heart was ready to break as she stood beside Dick, and looked at his white face, and thought how she had planned to amuse him when he was able to sit up; but she would not let a tear come, though it nearly choked her to keep them back,

especially when Dick said, "It's too bad you've got to go; but she and grandma will look out for me."

Miss Forbes was full of sympathy for Zandy, and would have pleaded for her, if she had not seen that there was no appeal from Mr. Craighead's "must."

Zandy kissed Dick with trembling lips, not venturing to speak, and went as far as the door. There she turned to take one more look, and that proved too much for her self-control. Rushing back to the bed she buried her face in the clothes, and cried with all her heart. Her grandmother tried to draw her away, saying, "My darling, this will never do;" but she shook off her hand impatiently.

"Zandy, don't—please," said Dick, at length, half crying himself, "you make me feel awfully."

Then Zandy lifted her head, and having kissed him again, left the room, bathed her face, put on her hat and gloves, and said she was ready.

Miss Forbes went with Zandy to the boat-landing, trying to cheer her by talking of the good times they would have when they were all together at the hotel, and planning for one grand "jollification," in which Dick should join, in honor of his recovery, and of her own meeting with Zandy. Zandy listened, and smiled a little once or twice, but had hardly spoken when they emerged from the woods and came in sight of the boats.

"I never shall forgive grandpapa for this!" she cried then. "I shall make him wish me back at Tom's!"

"Oh, fie, fie, childy!" remonstrated Miss Forbes. "You are only giving yourself something to be sorry for, when you have got used to the idea of leaving Dick. You will love your grandfather all the more for having been angry at him, and said bad things about him, and will have all the bother of repenting and confessing. I know just how these things work—I've experienced them. I advise you to take it coolly, since you are obliged to take it *somehow*."

"I can't;—I don't know *how* to take things coolly; and I don't want to, this, because I do think it is shameful."

"Better be jolly over it; there's no credit in being jolly when everything goes right, according to my friend, Mark Tapley. They are ready for you now; come."

She helped Zandy into the boat with Mr. Hollister and Royal, saying, "I deliver this child to your care, friends. Be good to her, and see that she has plenty of pastimes and pleasures, for she is in need of them."

She had come to love Zandy with the tender, protecting love of an older for a younger sister, and her heart was heavy at the

thought of parting with her, perhaps forever, after a few more days. She watched her, sitting silent and gloomy, till the boats were far out from the shore, and then walked soberly back to the house.

Stephen and Royal were absorbed in rowing, as they were ambitious to see what time they could make against Tom, and so Zandy had little to divert her thoughts from her grievances; and so far as Stephen was concerned, she would have had every opportunity to brood over them, if he had been never so idle; for he was very nearly as indignant with her as she was with her grandfather.

His mother was his model of the womanly virtues, and he could not remember ever to have seen her give way to an unamiable feeling. Unfailing gentleness was, to him, the indispensable grace in a woman, for the lack of which no degree of beauty, wisdom, self-devotion, or anything else that was admirable could atone. His unqualified approval of his sister Bessie was an exceptional thing, as she had more independence and energy than belonged to his ideal, and was far from being thoroughly amiable. But her sharp speeches and little outbursts were always deliberate and intentional, and were generally occasioned by her keen appreciation of the foibles of her fellow-beings; and they were very apt to touch an answering chord in Stephen's own composition. It was the unreasoning fits of anger, such as Zandy had given way to that day, that he especially detested;—nothing could be more unlovely and unladylike in his view; and during the winter he had been kept in a state of mind towards Zandy bordering closely on dislike. But in the sympathy her sisterly devotion could not fail to awaken, and the many womanly traits she had displayed in those days of trial, he had lost sight of her fault. Indeed, his constant thoughtfulness for her, and his untiring kindness to Dick, had dispelled from Zandy's mind the old feeling of hostility, that had grown out of her consciousness of never appearing well in his eyes, and their relations had come to be very friendly.

Now, as he sat opposite her cloudy face, and thought of the angry outburst he had witnessed, his indignation was in proportion to his estimate of her many fine qualities; they only served to make her fiery temper stand out in bolder relief, and to make it the more inexcusable. The cold disapproval of his manner, and the fact of his having seen her so angry, added to the bitterness of Zandy's feelings, while her pride kept her from making the least attempt to clear the clouds from her face; so she left the boat in as dismal a mood as when she entered it, and had but few words for Rachel, and was hardly polite to Mr. Forbes,

who was awaiting their landing, anxious to hear why his sister was left behind.

She fully recovered her amiability, however, before she slept that night; and verified her friend's prophecy, by repenting heartily, and regarding her grandfather with unwonted tenderness; and she wet her pillow with penitent tears. But she made no confession; she never did to her grandfather, except when her offence came so clearly under his notice that he demanded it. She manifested her repentance by various little unobtrusive attentions, and demonstrations of affection. To Royal she was gentleness itself. With Mr. Hollister she tried to hide the sense of shame she felt by an indifferent and don't-care air; but her assumptions and pretences were never successful; she could not keep the tell-tale color from her cheeks, or her eyelids from drooping suddenly; and her so evident regard for his opinion of her led Stephen to feel that a plain expression of his views, in short, a brief lecture on the subject of her want of self-control, might do her good; at all events it would relieve his own mind.

As a preliminary, he asked Zandy, much to her astonishment, to go rowing with him; and regarding it as a sign that he did not, after all, despise her, she went with the lightest of hearts.

The day was lovely—not too warm for comfort; soft white clouds floated dreamily across the deep-blue sky, casting slowly shifting shadows on the lake and mountains; and the water was as still as if unwilling to mar, by so much as a ripple, the perfectness of the picture it reflected. They rowed—Zandy had insisted upon having a pair of oars herself—among the many exquisite little islands, that lay like gems in beds of crystal; gathered flowers and ferns that grew within reach of their hands; rested on their oars to listen to the midsummer sounds from the woods, and sent the echoes flying now and then with their shouts; and the morning passed so quickly that Zandy was astonished when Stephen said it was nearly noon, and they must make for home. Zandy gave her attention to rowing, then. She was no novice in the art, having had plenty of practice on Emerald Lake, and Stephen complimented her clear, even strokes, and secretly appreciated the unconscious grace of her motions.

He broke a silence that fell between them, while each rowed with a will, by saying:

“Alexandra—”

“Well?” said Zandy, resting her oars, and turning her head to listen. The tone had been very much the same as that in

which Stephen addressed her in recitations, and she was curious to know what was coming.

"Do you know what I consider the greatest charm in a woman—the one without which every other charm is lost—shall I tell you what it is?"

"Yes—no, you needn't—I know without your telling me," said Zandy, plying her oars again, energetically, but not very steadily.

"Perhaps you don't;—girls generally think that men admire beauty above everything; but it is a great mistake."

"I know very well what you think: that a girl might be a dunce, and plain, and deceitful, and it wouldn't matter if she only were amiable."

"Amiability is the trait that I consider indispensable in a lady. Of course there are others, the possession of which we take for granted, until circumstances force their absence on our notice; they are the foundation of everything, and if they are wanting there is *no* superstructure, there being nothing to build upon. But when the foundation is perfect, and we naturally look for corresponding perfection in what rests upon it—what a pity it is to find some unsightly excrescence marring the whole!"

Stephen waited a moment, and as Zandy made no remark, and kept her oars dipping steadily in time with his, he went on: "It may be taking too much upon myself, and yet I think that, as your teacher, I have some right to tell you of your faults."

"There is no need of your telling me what I know perfectly well already," said Zandy impatiently, jerking her oars a little.

"Perhaps not;—but you can hardly be sensitive on the subject, when you never hesitate to display your failings for my benefit."

"For *your benefit!* If you happen to be by when something makes me angry, I'm not going to take the trouble to seem amiable on your account; and you needn't think I do *anything* for *your benefit.*"

"Oh, well," said Stephen, contemptuously, "I might have known that you could not bear a criticism, or a friendly suggestion as to your behavior, with equanimity, after the exhibition I witnessed the other day, or even if I had called to mind the incident of your cousin's birthday, and some of the little episodes in the school-room last winter."

"You have said enough!" cried Zandy, letting her oars drag. "I won't hear another word. Your having been my teacher for a little while does *not* give you the right to lecture me, and say

disagreeable things; and if you expect it to do me any good, you are very much mistaken."

"I don't expect it, I assure you. I did foolishly imagine that our friendly relations during your brother's illness might make it possible for me to speak plainly, and perhaps help you in overcoming your fault, if I should continue to be your teacher. But I see that I *was* very much mistaken."

"You'll not be my teacher any more! I shan't go back to New York to see your reproving, scornful looks, and hear your disagreeable remarks, you may depend; and I only wish I need never see you again after to-day."

"Very well! but will you have the goodness to take in your oars, if you are not going to row any more?"

Zandy paid no sort of heed to Stephen's request, unless it were to trail the oars a little more decidedly.

"If you *could* take some other mode of venting your anger—if you would wait till we have landed—"

Zandy gave the oars a sudden dip downward, and one of them was forced from her hold. She started forward to catch it, before it slipped quite out of the lock, and in a flash the boat was upset, and she and Stephen were in the water.

Fortunately, Stephen was quite equal to the emergency; unfortunately, Rachel stood on the shore, having come down to watch for them, and tell them that it was dinner-time. Seeing the catastrophe, she set up a series of shrieks that brought every man, woman and child within hearing to the spot; and Stephen had the pleasure of landing his dripping burden amid a crowd of excited witnesses, and to answer a dozen questions before he could escape.

"She only needs to be put to bed, and have some hot drink," he said to Rachel and the other women who had taken possession of Zandy. "She is only frightened;" and he added to himself, "no danger of her being taken to heaven yet."

Zandy was put to bed, and dosed with herb-tea for the rest of the day, much to her disgust; and there her grandfather and Royal found her, when they returned at night from a fishing excursion. They heard the story of the upset from Stephen, before they saw Zandy; and she knew by their affectionate sympathy and solicitude that he had kept back everything that would have reflected on her behavior. But that was little consolation. It seemed to her that nothing could ever reconcile her to herself again, or make life anything but a burden of mortification, and that she never should cease to blush.

Stephen had taken his departure in the early stage, before Zandy appeared the next morning, and all day she was

divided between thankfulness that she had not been obliged to meet him again, and sorrow over the miserable ending to everything like friendliness between them; for he *must* despise her now, and she had said she hoped she never should see him again.

However, every day made life less a burden, until, when her grandmother and Miss Forbes came with Dick to the hotel she was quite ready to think herself the happiest girl in the world, in being with Dick again, and seeing that he was steadily gaining strength, and that he was perfectly contented to be left with her, while the others were gone on little expeditions.

The parting with Zandy was less sad than Miss Forbes had anticipated, as Mr. and Mrs. Craighead had insisted that she should spend a week with them in Oxley before returning to her home in Boston.

CHAPTER XX.

AFTER LONG GRIEF AND PAIN.

THE letter which Mr. Craighead wrote to Mrs. William, informing her by what train they should reach Oxley, and directing that Reuben should meet them, went astray, and consequently they were not expected, and there was no Reuben at the station.

"You did not give the letter time, my dear, depend upon it," said Mrs. Craighead, when her husband expressed his annoyance at having to wait for a carriage from the village. "The mails are very irregular, coming from those out-of-the-way places. It will be a grand surprise, if they really are not looking for us to-day."

The first surprise fell to the lot of Corrie and Johnny, who were on their way home from a little visit to Carrie Reynolds, their allegiance to her having gained strength from the time she was deposed, by the arrival of their aunt to take the reins. Corrie had Mehitabel in her arms, arrayed in the pink silk Grace had made for her; and the doll, with all her fineries, fell to the ground when Johnny, having suddenly espied the carriage, full of the well-known faces, cried, "Look! grandma! Zandy!" and dashed after it, pell-mell.

Corrie stood still, in dazed astonishment, until the carriage had stopped, and Johnny had clambered in over the wheel, and Dick had called, "Come on, Corrie! don't you want to ride?"

Then she snatched Mehitabel from the dust, and was soon in the midst of her friends, bestowing kisses and hugs without stint. Just as it came Royal's turn, she suddenly exclaimed, with wide-open eyes and uplifted hands: "Grandma! what ever *do* you think?"

What she was about to divulge did not transpire, as Johnny sprang at her "like a cat at a mouse," as Dick said, and put his hand tightly over her mouth, holding it there, while he whispered something in her ear. Corrie submitted meekly to the indignity, only growing very red in the face, and looking very much abashed.

"What wonderful secret can Corrie have to tell, that you

guard so fiercely, Johnny?" asked his grandmother, laughing, as everybody did.

"Why, it's something she promised solemnly and truly that she wouldn't tell," cried Johnny, with warning glances still fixed on Corrie.

"I didn't, Johnny!" cried Corrie. "I never promised! Aunt Louisa only told us we mustn't."

"That ought to have been enough without a promise, my dear," said her grandmother.

"I didn't mean to tell, grandma, I forgot. I didn't know I was going to; but Johnny *knows* I didn't promise solemnly and truly."

"Well, any way," cried Johnny, as Zandy looked at him reproachfully, and kissed Corrie's little red face, "it would have been as dreadful if she had told, as if she had promised; for Helen is to tell grandma herself—like a story to begin with, and Corrie's telling would have spoiled it all. Grandma *couldn't have got home* if she had known beforehand."

Mr. and Mrs. Craighead exchanged anxious glances, and Dick made Johnny grow red in his turn, by whispering that he had "done it now!"

"Is everybody well?" asked Zandy of Johnny, in a low tone.

"Yes, everybody—except Sally Clark."

"Gracie's gone away, Zandy," said Corrie, recovering a little from her depression.

"I know it; Dick had a letter from her the day before we came away."

"She isn't coming back," said Corrie, dismally.

"Yes, she is, sometime," said Johnny; "but she's going to stay at Rhinebeck till Aunt Louisa goes home to New York."

When they reached home, Zandy and Dick and Royal stayed behind to hear the wonderful secret from Corrie and Johnny. Rachel, having carried in the shawls and bags, went to the kitchen to electrify its occupants by her sudden appearance, and to open the never-to-be-finished chapter of her adventures and trials. Mr. and Mrs. Craighead proceeded quietly up stairs, having found the drawing-room and library empty.

Mr. Craighead went to his own room, to take off his dusty coat and make himself comfortable, as his mind was relieved by seeing nothing unusual in the aspect of things; he had quite concluded that the secret was nothing more than some of the children's nonsense.

But Mrs. Craighead's attention had been arrested by a startling fact: the door of a room at the other end of the hall—one of the rooms that were never used, that were kept sacredly

closed—stood partly open. After a moment's pause, and with a feeling of mingled surprise and tender sadness at the thought of her whose presence had once made it so sweet a place, she approached with slow steps.

When she reached it, she waited—not to listen, for she did not dream that any one was in the room; but she did plainly hear a soft movement, and she pushed the door a little farther open, and looked in.

As through a mist, she saw Mrs. William Craighead sitting near the window, from which the delicate lace curtains were looped back as of old, giving a glimpse of the sunset hills—how well she could see it all, in spite of the mist before her eyes! There was the little writing-desk, at which Mrs. William was busily writing; the chairs where no one had sat in all those silent years; the pictures and books—each pretty and useful thing, so familiar, yet carrying such a keen pang to the mother's heart. Near by, on a luxurious lounge, Helen lay asleep. The face was thinner than when her grandmother saw it last, and there was a hectic flush on each cheek, and the breath was short and irregular. Was the secret, then, that Helen was worse? and perhaps had taken an invalid's imperative fancy to come to this room? she had such an intense love and admiration for the memory of her beautiful young aunt. Well—she was glad Louisa had gratified her; it was, after all, perhaps a selfish feeling that had led her to keep that room so wholly to herself; and it was surely easier to find it appropriated, than to have endured the pain of consenting to its being done.

But who was this stranger who sat at Helen's side? Her back was towards the door, and not a line of her face was visible; but as Mrs. Craighead regarded the head, with its mass of silvery hair, and the slender figure in a pretty muslin dress, a faint flush passed over her own face, and the mist cleared from her eyes. "Yes," she thought, "it is a *stranger*—some friend of Louisa's, visiting her from the city—it is not like Louisa to do such a thing."

She did not care to make her presence known then; she would go to her own room, and by-and-by would come back, when she could hide her displeasure, as for Helen's sake she should do. She must prepare her husband, too, for finding the sacred place invaded.

As she was about to turn quietly away, Louisa said, without looking up from her writing, "I have given William your message for Mr. Hollister, and sent your love."

"Thanks, dear, and tell him that I shall write, myself, as soon as I can; he will know that I can't now—I wish I *could* be patient."

"It would be superhuman if you were," returned Louisa.

The lady laid her book down in her lap, and bending forward in her chair, said: "We *must* hear from them to-day—don't you think so?—what is it, Louisa?"

Louisa had turned her face to reply, and her sudden look of amazement and dismay occasioned the startled question; and even as it was asked she sprang forward, with the hope that even yet she might break the shock. But she only was in time to receive Mrs. Craighead in her arms as she fell.

"Mother! mother! my precious mother! give her to me!"

"Here, mamma—Aunt Edith, lay her here," said Helen, who had been awakened by the sound of voices, and with a quick intuition, and an unwonted strength, had pushed the chair away and wheeled the lounge nearer, so that her grandmother could be easily placed upon it.

"My own mother! dearest mother! look at me—at Edith;—speak to your child!—I have waited so long to hear your voice!—O God, I will not, I *cannot* give her up now.—Mother, open your eyes, in pity, dearest, darling mother, and let me see the love in them, as I used so long ago. I shall die—I *cannot* live, if I am to lose you now. Now? oh no, no! not now! O God! be merciful!—it cannot be that I shall lose her now."

Such were the voiceless cries of Edith's heart, as with cold, trembling hands, and quivering lips, and eyes full of tearless woe, she loosened her mother's dress, and eagerly applied the restoratives Louisa brought.

In the meantime, Helen had left the room unnoticed, to find her grandfather, and make sure of his being prepared for the sight of Edith. She met him in the hall, near the stairs.

"My dear child," he said, putting his arms about her, "how glad I am to see you so well! Corrie and Johnny had some mystery in their foolish little heads, and I was half afraid that you were ill, or something had gone wrong. Where is everybody? is your grandmother in your mother's room? let us go and find them."

"Grandpa, dear," began Helen, feebly resisting, as he would have led her through the hall, "there is a mystery—something wonderful has happened—something so wonderful and sweet that I don't know how to tell it."

"Out with it, my dear," said her grandfather, stopping short. "If it's a pleasant thing, why should it be hard to tell?"

"I mustn't tell it suddenly, grandpa," said Helen faintly, her

exertions and the excitement beginning to tell on her small stock of strength.

At that moment her mother came from Edith's room, having heard Helen's voice.

"My child," she said anxiously, "you are doing too much. Father"—

But Mr. Craighead had freed himself from Helen's light hold, and already stood at Edith's door; and Louisa, feeling that things must take their own course now, waited to charge Rachel, who had answered the bell, to keep the children all down stairs for the present, and to send instantly for the doctor.

If it is ever true that two opposite emotions, like a sudden alarm and an overwhelming joy, can counterbalance each other, it was true in Mr. Craighead's case. He was shocked beyond expression at seeing his wife lying insensible, so white, and with closed eyes; but the whole truth, the full meaning of the scene before him—the solution of the mystery—flashed upon him with his first look; and he stood as if rooted to the floor, unable to speak or move.

Edith had continued, with wonderful composure, using restoratives and sparing no effort, until now, a sudden thought of Mrs. Heine came to mind; and with a wild, despairing look at the lifeless face, she threw her arms about her mother, and laid her own cheek against hers.

"Mother, mother," she moaned, "don't you know that my heart is breaking? Not one word for your child? O God, not even one little hour of happiness for her and me, after all our pain—I cannot—cannot bear it."

She started to her feet, clasping her hands in an agony above her head, but sank again upon her knees; and laying her hand tenderly on her mother's forehead, she kissed her lips and eyes over and over, calling her by every endearing name, as if feeling that so much love *must* meet with some response.

Louisa's heart was wrung with pity; but she was sure it was only a deep swoon, and her solicitude was divided between the three. Perplexed and anxious as to what was best to do, she went to the figure, standing in statue-like stillness all this time, and said quietly, "Father, you see Edith has come back to us; but unless you are calm, and help us, we may lose *mother*. I have sent for the doctor, but it all depends upon us—upon *you*, dear father. Speak to Edith, and then think of *her*;—Edith, see—who is this?" She lifted Edith to her feet. Edith turned quickly, and with a wild cry, threw herself into her father's arms. He held her close—looked into her face, while

his own worked painfully—kissed her many times with quivering lips, and folded her close again, with a convulsive sob.

“Can it be? Is it Edith—my precious daughter?”

“Father, father—say it again. I have waited so long to hear it.”

“My darling daughter—my own sweet child.”

“I must hear her say it, too,” cried Edith, breaking suddenly from her father’s arms. “I must have you both, or I cannot live.”

She would have knelt beside her mother again, but Louisa prevented her.

“You will have her, dear Edith, if you are calm and quiet now; she is recovering; don’t let her see you at first; stand here, and let father be beside her.”

All eyes were anxiously fixed upon the dear face, where the quivering lids, the faint tinge of color, and the slight movement of the lips showed returning consciousness. Mr. Craighead knelt by the lounge, and took the cold hands in his. Edith stood near, but out of sight, almost losing self-control, in the intensity of her relief and joyful impatience.

“My dear wife, are you better?” asked Mr. Craighead in a trembling voice, as the eyes at length opened slowly, and gazed at him.

“What is it? I am not ill, am I, dear?”

She looked anxiously from her husband to Louisa, and then her eyes wandered to different things in the room.

“I have been dreaming,” she said, faintly, shutting her eyes for an instant, “and I cannot put the dream out of my mind at once. How strange it is!”

“What is strange, mother dear?” asked Louisa.

“That I cannot see things as they are”—Mrs. Craighead replied, opening her eyes, and speaking with dreamy uncertainty, while she gazed about her once more—“instead of as they were in—my dream;—*have* I been dreaming?” she asked earnestly, her eyes coming back to her husband’s face.

“What was your dream, mother?” Louisa asked. “Do things seem to you now just as they did in your dream?”

“No—no!”

Mrs. Craighead’s eyes wandered to the door, where Zandy and Dick and Royal and Corrie and Johnny had all gathered, noiselessly, having become too impatient to stay away any longer. They fell next on Helen, and the sight of her seemed to quicken her consciousness.

“In my dream, Helen was lying—where am I now?—it

looks so like that room—and yet it cannot be—I cannot make it seem real.”

“What else, mother?” suggested Louisa, feeling that this slow-returning realization of the truth was the very thing to be desired. “Was Helen alone—did you think!”

“No, not alone;—you were with her—and—and—who was it? what was it?—an angel? yes, it was an angel, in shining white raiment. No, it was a stranger—some one I had never seen before—at least it seemed so at first—and then—I remember now; it was a *sweet dream*.”

The last words were said almost in a whisper, and the head was turned wearily on the pillow, and the eyes closed; but only to open again, to take a new survey of the faces and objects near.

“It is so strange that I see that room so distinctly!”

Edith here stretched out her arms towards her mother, and could hardly restrain the passionate impulse of her heart. And Corrie was by this time excited quite past control, and cried out in a shrill little voice:

“Grandma! it’s the *secret*, don’t you know? look at her! at Aunt Edith—*there* she is!”

Half-a-dozen pairs of hands seized Corrie before she had fairly uttered the last words, and carried her into the hall; but she had supplied the key her grandmother’s consciousness was seeking.

Catching her husband’s arm, she raised herself, and in an instant Edith was folded to her mother’s heart, and feeling, for the first time, that her exile was at an end, and her joy was full.

The sacred quiet of those first moments of reunion was unbroken by a sound.

After a time, when Edith had heard, often repeated, the sweet words she had so long yearned to hear, and her head was in its old resting-place, and her father sat close beside her, where she could see his face and hold his hand, a question came from the depths of the mother’s heart—glad and thankful, but still unsatisfied, as it was:

“My child”—she paused to kiss the white hair, that sad reminder of past suffering; “my child, where are—God must have spared them, with you—*where are they?*”

“In heaven, darling mother.”

“Are you *sure?*” whispered the mother. “There must be a *hope*.”

“There is no hope, dearest mother. I am sure; God only spared me.”

"I will not complain—I will be only thankful," said the mother in her own heart, laying her hand tenderly on the head resting on her bosom.

"If you were saved, my daughter," said the father, "and restored to us after so long a time, there must be at least a possibility—unless"—

"Oh, my father," said Edith, in agonized tones, "I *know*—I *know* that they are in heaven."

There was a long silence, broken only by sobs.

"My husband," said the mother at length, "let us thank God for giving us back one of our children."

CHAPTER XXI.

AT THE SEA-SHORE.

ON the arrival of the *Fleetwood* at New York, Henry Hollister took Edith to a hotel, and went to make known to her brother William the overwhelming truth.

He had looked forward to meeting Mr. Craighead as an ordeal that must of necessity be painful; but the hearty cordiality with which he was welcomed, put every sense of humiliation and embarrassment to flight; and when assured of the well-being of his dearest friends, he gave himself up to the joy of being near them once more.

The brother's emotions on learning Henry's tidings can be better imagined than described.

Having seen Edith and Mr. Craighead start for Oxley that same evening, Henry went to his home, not knowing whether he should find it wholly deserted or not. Mr. Craighead knew that Mrs. Hollister and Bessie and Stephen were at the seashore, but was uncertain as to Mrs. Frisby. Henry was by no means glad to hear that his great-aunt had taken up her abode with his mother, and he had no desire to meet her now, especially when he was longing only for the loving welcome he was sure to receive from his mother and sister. Still he was glad to find the house open, as he intended to wait in town for the answer to a letter he had written his mother while on the ship—a long letter, written at different times, telling as much as could be told by pen, of himself and his life since they parted. He would have sent it to announce his return, if his mother had been at home, not feeling willing to risk a surprise, and now had mailed it as soon as he learned her address from Mr. Craighead.

The sight of the familiar, honest face of Ann McCarthy, who had come with them from Oxley and faithfully followed their fallen fortunes, was a glad one. She seemed almost bereft of her wits when she opened the door and saw Henry; but gave him a characteristic greeting when once convinced that he was flesh and blood, and not a ghost; and had just bethought her to let him come in, and not do all her talking with him standing on the steps, when the dining-room door opened

at the end of the little hall, and a severely inquiring face appeared.

"Who's that, Ann? If it's a peddler, send him away; we don't want anything; and don't you stand there, gabbling to him."

"It ain't a peddler, ma'am," replied Ann, shortly. "It's Mистер Henry come home—the Lord be praised for that same! How rejiced his poor dear mother will be!"

"What do you say, you crazy woman?" exclaimed Mrs. Frisby, opening the door a little wider, and bringing her glasses down from her forehead, to take a better view of the intruder.

"Crazy, indade!" cried Ann, indignantly, "You think I don't know Mистер Henry, an' I been in the family sence he was a small boy an' they rich an' powerful! Walk in, Mистер Henry, an' have some supper;—a cup iv tay will do ye good."

Mrs. Frisby, at this juncture, ended her inspection by re-entering the dining-room and shutting the door.

"Don't yez mind her, she's an ould vixen—beggin' yer pardon, an' she ye're aunt. As if she was to ride over yez in ye're in own mother's house, as has been a pinin' to see yez, an' 'll be heart-broken for joy when she hears ye've come home! I jist wish we could have a grand faste an' 'lumination! Come in now, there's a darlint, an' hould ye're own wid her, or she'll stand right atop iv ye."

Henry followed his valiant adviser into the dining-room, where Mrs. Frisby was seated, finishing her supper. She laid down her knife and fork, and fixed severe looks upon Henry, when he approached her with a view to establishing peace relations.

"I assure you, aunt, that I am your grand-nephew, Henry. I have heard of you, though I never had the pleasure of meeting you before."

"I have heard of *you*, young man," replied Mrs. Frisby, "and you can judge whether I have heard any good."

"Ye've heerd nothin' else, ma'am, that I know, an' you too," said Ann, pausing, in the act of laying a plate and knife and fork for Henry.

"Hold your tongue, you impudent, bold hussy!" exclaimed Mrs. Frisby, turning sharply from Henry to her sworn foe.

"I'll not hould my tongue, leastways whin I haves thruth on my side," and Ann marched to the cupboard with her nose in the air.

"It ain't to be supposed," Mrs. Frisby said, addressing her nephew again, "that you have been well employed since you've been gone, or you would have written to your mother, and not

kept her in trouble and suspense all the time—not that I uphold her for being so upset by it; but all the same, it shows that you haven't forsaken your wicked ways. I don't know how you had the face to come back! I suppose it's for the sake of living on your poor mother's little pittance. You won't get anything from *me*—mind that, young man."

"There's *somethin'* he'll be sure to get," muttered Ann, who came into the room in time to hear the last sentence; "an' that's *somethin'* that's so chape, nobody's so poor an' stingy they can't give 'em frayly; an' it's spiteful words. Sure, an' nobody was iver so ginerous wid thim as hersel'. Sit down, pl'ase," she said, placing a chair for Henry, who had apparently become oblivious of his aunt's existence, and was walking about, taking a survey of the more familiar objects in the room. "I'll pour ye some tay," she added, as Mrs. Frisby solemnly folded her napkin, and prepared to leave the table.

"Thank you, Ann, I remember your tea of old. I hope you haven't forgotten how I like it."

"Dade I hain't, Mистер Henry, as ye'll see," replied Ann, watching with undisguised impatience for Mrs. Frisby to leave the tea-tray, which she presently did, with a small glass dish of preserves in one hand, and a plate of spiced salmon in the other.

"Jist look at that, onct," ejaculated Ann, in a scornful rage; "did iver anny one see the likes iv that for maneness?"

"Who paid for these things?" demanded Mrs. Frisby, pausing on her way to the cupboard with her treasures. "I ain't going to provide delicacies for everybody that comes along. You ought to have money enough to buy them for yourself," she added, addressing Henry with grim significance, as she seated herself by the window, folding her hands solemnly.

He seemed not to see or hear her, but proceeded coolly with his supper; while Ann stood by, glowering at her, and waiting upon Henry between times.

"How is your mother, Ann? I hope she has got over her rheumatism."

"Indade, Mистер Henry, an' *is* it that yez remimber me ould mother?" asked Ann, immensely pleased at Henry's behavior. "Sure, an' it's wonderful kind iv yez to bear her in remimbrance so long; an' she's about the same as whin ye wint away; sometimes she's quite aisy, an' agin she ain't; she haves her ups an' downs; thank ye kindly for axin'."

"I am very glad to find you here. It seemed like old times to have you open the door for me."

"Thank yez; an' I'm sure I hope I may spind the rist iv me days wid yez all."

"I hope so too, Ann."

Whether the reproofs and warnings, and solemn sentences Mrs. Frisby meant to convey by every look and gesture, whenever she saw Henry, during his sojourn at home, were appreciated, she had not the pleasure of knowing, as he treated her with the most perfectly nonchalant politeness.

On the third day after his arrival, the answer to his letter to his mother was brought by Stephen. The meeting of the brothers was unconstrained and cordial, thanks, perhaps, to the fact that Henry was completely taken by surprise, and that his demonstrative joy thawed the last lingering coldness in Stephen's feeling towards him. His mother's letter and Bessie's enclosed note left him nothing to wish for, except to see them, and it was but a night's journey to where they waited his coming, with impatience quite equal to his own. It seemed as if the boat lay becalmed, and as if the stage crept at a snail's pace; yet in due time, they rattled past the scattered houses that marked the beginning of the little seashore town.

"You must behave as if you had been gone only a week, and weren't very glad to get home, Hal," said Stephen, seeing how pale and excited his brother was looking.

"Much easier said than done," answered Henry.

As they drove up to the little hotel, Henry caught a glimpse of Bessie at the window: and springing from the stage before it had fairly stopped, he dashed up the stairs.

"Henry! dearest boy! here we are," cried Bessie, running up to him, and throwing herself into his arms; and she clung to him until her mother's voice made her unclasp her hands, and yield him to her embrace.

Bessie let her mother have Henry pretty much to herself that day, and was rewarded at night by the satisfaction with which she referred to their long talks. She seemed not to have a misgiving as to Henry's future, and to think of those sad months as the time of trial and discipline, that had had their desired effect in purifying and strengthening his character.

The next morning Bessie claimed Henry for a walk to the Beach.

"What a quaint old place," said Henry, as they strolled along the wide grass-grown street.

"Isn't it?" said Bessie. "You can't think how I have revelled in all this old-timey quaintness; it is so refreshing to find a town that doesn't remind one of swaddling-clothes—hasn't the odor of new paint and mortar. This might date back indefinitely, ignoring Columbus and the *Mayflower*, and all our disagreeably recent beginnings."

"It has some features of doubtful beauty," said Henry.

"Never sigh for beauty when you can have antiquity," said Bessie.

"You ought to have been born in some mouldy, worm-eaten country of Europe, Bess."

"It is true—I ought. I have a decided affinity for mould and rust and dinginess. A pedigree, a title, a ruined castle and a crest would make me happy."

"What sentiments, Bess! Are these new notions of yours? I had forgotten that you were such a poor republican."

"I have no new notions. I scorn a new idea, or a new interest. I abide by the old opinions, tastes, friendships—everything. Have you observed the windmills, my dear—one at each end of the street, which means the town? I wouldn't inquire into their age, preferring to believe that they have ground the town wheat and corn since the flood. And that graveyard and goose-pond—I haven't been inside the graveyard; but I have read, in imagination, epitaphs dating back centuries; and as to the goose-pond, who knoweth in what dim distance of time its springs first bubbled up, and what countless generations of geese have paddled in its dingy waters."

"Goose-processions seem to be one of the distinctive peculiarities, as well as the windmills. Who comes here?" asked Henry, glancing back, on hearing hurried footsteps behind them—"the young man whose invitation to drive you declined last night, isn't it?"

Bessie glanced back too, and replied, "Yes, alas!"

"Good morning," said a pleasant voice. "Are you going to the Beach?"

"Yes."

"It's a fine morning for a bath—the surf is glorious. I went back to the house for you, when I found how fine it was, fearing you might miss it. I am glad you are going in."

"It was very good of you, but I am not going in this morning. I am only going to let my brother have one look at the bathers, and then take him away for a walk."

"How do you know but I would like a surf bath myself?" asked Henry, laughing.

"I can't help what you would like, my dear—my brother, Mr. Schuyler."

The young men shook hands, and Bessie went on:

"I can't help what you would like in the matter, because I *must* have a talk with you this morning; mamma will be sure to claim you this afternoon. You know we must get talked up so as to begin anew in New York."

"I will not prevent it," said Mr. Schuyler, good-naturedly. "I will only stay with you till you tell me to go, or until you are through looking at the bathers; then I will leave you to your 'talking up.'"

"Very well," returned Bessie, "that will do. You deserve a credit-mark for taking my hints, and taking them so amiably—men are generally so stupid about such things."

"Your *hints*, as you are pleased to call them, are hardly a tax upon even masculine wits; and as for taking them amiably—a queen has a right to dismiss her vassals."

"More nonsense!" muttered Bessie. "A schoolma'am has a right to dismiss her scholars, would be more to the purpose."

"I accept the amendment—you have taught me a great deal!—Mrs. Tenny says you are to leave us to-morrow."

"Mrs. Tenny's tongue is like a telegraph-wire: whatever she hears is known, in a flash, as far as her voice can reach."

"Do you wish our going to be a secret, Bess?" asked her brother, wondering what made her so ungracious.

"No—I only stated it as a fact, as I might say that birds fly and fishes swim."

"Shall you go by boat?" asked Mr. Schuyler.

"I suppose so."

"I wish you would let me drive your mother and yourself over to the Harbor. My sister would enjoy the drive, and it would take but half the time, and be less tiresome for you, in every way."

"I shall be very glad if you will take mamma; the stage does tire her dreadfully, but as for me, I like it, and wouldn't miss the chance of one more ride in that antediluvian vehicle for a great deal. I am just as thankful, you know, as if I availed myself of your kindness."

At that moment they came in sight of the bathers, and Bessie exclaimed:

"If there is a more grotesque sight in the world than this, I have yet to see it. I do wonder how we can ever regard ourselves with complacency, after being at the seashore."

"People in general haven't the keen eye for the ludicrous that you have, Bess, fortunately for their self-respect," said her brother.

"Do you remember, Mr. Schuyler, when you essayed to show me how to go through the breakers?" asked Bessie. "I am positive that no one that witnessed that scene will ever see you or me, or even think of us, without a smile. I can give you but a faint idea of it, Henry; but behold us with your mind's eye, walking solemnly down to the water, in our faded, scrumpy

duds. We wade out some distance, until a great breaker comes on apace. 'Now, now! here it comes,' cries Mr. Schuyler, 'stoop down, and let it go over you—so! there! wasn't that splendid?' I sputter and gasp and strangle, and try to say Yes, but before I am able, he exclaims, 'Here's another—bend down! so!—you are getting on famously!' I sputter and gasp and strangle worse than before, and am unable to remonstrate, as I would, gladly; and in a moment Mr. Schuyler says cheerfully, 'Here's a grand one! bigger than either of the others! stoop down—take care—now! so! wasn't that glorious? Why, what is the matter? did you swallow some salt water?'—as if my nose and eyes and mouth and ears were not full of it! 'I am afraid that last was too much for you, it was such a big fellow. Take care, here's another, better not go through that;' and in my desperation I do manage to sputter out, 'Take me in—I am almost dead.'"

"I thought you had forgiven me for so nearly drowning you," said Mr. Schuyler, trying to speak lightly, and look at ease, though it was plain to see that it was a very sensitive subject.

"So I have, and I shouldn't have told of it, if Henry had not seemed disposed to question the absurdities liable at the seashore. Miss Tenny will certainly annihilate us with her looks, unless we take ourselves away, so good-by."

"Mr. Schuyler bowed, and was still looking after the brother and sister, as they walked up the beach, arm in arm, when a young lady, in an elaborate morning dress, with a towel pinned around her neck, over which her not very luxuriant hair hung for drying purposes, came tripping up to him.

"Oh, Mr. Schuyler! I *hope* you're not going in bathing now;—it's too late for a bath, really, and we want you for croquet. We had the ground rolled this morning, and there's just time for a nice game before dinner."

"I am a poor hand at croquet, you know, Miss Tenny," replied Mr. Schuyler; "I should only spoil your game."

"Oh! how can you say so? We can't let you off!" pleaded Miss Tenny, bringing her eyes to bear, with what she evidently considered great effect, as a means of carrying her point. "I expect you to play on my side, and help me to win—I am so dreadfully behindhand in counts. Come! you will not refuse?"

Mr. Schuyler always found it hard to refuse a lady's request, and so now, much against his will, he yielded, and walked towards the village with Miss Tenny, followed by the others who were to join in the game.

"Is that Miss Hollister's intended?" asked Miss Tenny,

looking back at Bessie and Henry, who were, by this time, far up the beach.

"It is her brother," said Mr. Schuyler.

"Oh! is it. I knew her brother had come, but I thought perhaps that might be—somebody else. Of course, I haven't seen him except at the table. How could he come here? Isn't it surprising?"

"Why should he not come here, if he chooses? I really cannot see anything surprising in it."

"Why!" exclaimed Miss Tenny, drawing very near to Mr. Schuyler, and speaking in a confidential tone, "don't you know about it? We only heard of it last night; mamma learned it from one of the ladies who knows the wife of one of the partners in the firm where Mr. Hollister was;—don't you really know anything about it?"

"I have not the most remote idea what you mean," replied Mr. Schuyler, with some irritation in his tone.

"Well, I'm sure I supposed all you gentlemen knew—such things always do get to be known so soon. I suppose there can be no harm in my telling *you*; but you won't repeat it;—Mr. Hollister has been away a long time, you know."

"Yes."

"Well, he committed a forgery! and *ran away!* His employer was kind, and let him go—did not try to arrest him. Wasn't it shocking? But don't you think it the strangest thing that he should come here? and that his mother and sister and brother should force themselves among respectable people, as they have? I am so glad ma found it out in time, for, I dare say, I might have asked the daughter to call on me, if she had not. Of course she isn't in our set—she teaches, you know; but she is a nice girl, and her father stood well, pa says, before he died—though they're poor now. It's such a pity, isn't it? her other brother is such a *very* nice young man!"

Miss Tenny made the last remark with a furtive glance at her companion, and was very much flattered to see how pale his face was, and how compressed his lips were; she had no expectation of its having such an effect, and her heart beat with hope. His reply somewhat dashed it.

"Reports that come in such round-about ways are not to be lightly credited, Miss Tenny. But if it were true, it would be most unjust to let it affect one's opinion of the other members of the family, in the slightest degree."

"Do you really feel so about it, Mr. Schuyler?" asked Miss Tenny, swallowing her disappointment as well as she could, and changing her tactics. "Of course ladies can't judge of such

things as well as men, and I'm sure I'm very glad if it isn't going to reflect on the family—it would be such a pity, such nice people!—I wonder if it will have any effect on Miss Hollister's engagement? I *hope* not, I'm sure; *that* would be too dreadful."

Mr. Schuyler's lips opened as if he would have asked some question, or made some comment; but closed again, and if Miss Tenny had looked at him then, she would have seen that they were colorless, as well as the rest of his face. But she could not, with all her courage, have met his eyes while uttering her little fabrication. As he made no reply, she went on:

"If the poor girl *could* get married now, what a comfort it would be in case this dreadful report should prove true. I'm sure I wish she might. She is older than the brothers, isn't she? she doesn't look it—I'm sure I never should think of her being in the least passé; but ma heard her tell—I believe she told ma herself, that she was the *eldest*; I believe ma asked her—she is always so curious about people's ages; I tell her that when I get past twenty I shall bind her to solemn secrecy."

"Are we to play roquet-croquet to-day?" asked Mr. Schuyler of one of the other young ladies who overtook them at the moment.

"O yes, indeed," cried Miss Tenny, in gay spirits at Mr. Schuyler's apparent indifference to her rival's engagement; "the other is too stupid. Remember, you are to be *my* partner!"

CHAPTER XXII.

REVELATIONS.

HENRY and Bessie walked on in silence a minute or two, after leaving Mr. Schuyler, and then Henry remarked:

"What a fine manly face Mr. Schuyler has!"

"All the silly girls and managing mammas in town are of the same opinion, my dear," returned Bessie.

"And what may *your* opinion be, my sensible sister?"

"His looks are well enough; who cares for beauty in a man?"

"What fault have you to find with him otherwise?"

"None—none in the world! you couldn't expect me to dissent from the universal verdict, which is—perfection. It really is enough to make one blush for one's kind, to be at the seashore for a month, with vain, manœvering girls and their match-making mammas. Mr. Schuyler happens to have been the only fish worth the catching here, since we came, and every bait has been used for his capture, from bashful airs of innocence, to the most unblushing arts and tricks."

"Is he rich, added to his other charms?" asked Henry.

"Oh, yes, rich of course, or the mammas wouldn't be after him. Half the girls are at swords'-points on his account, and try to make foils of each other. It is absolutely sickening to see girls make themselves so cheap."

"I should gather, from my limited observations, that you have caught the fish, without angling for him."

"Nonsense! *nonsense!* Henry," cried Bessie, coloring, "don't say such a foolish thing. It isn't to be imagined that a mortal man could be so fawned over and courted and flattered, without having his head turned; and I suppose Mr. Schuyler feels dissatisfied, as long as one woman refuses to do him homage."

"That isn't your honest opinion, Bessie, I know very well," said Henry, regarding his sister's face curiously, as she walked with her eyes on the ground.

"Well, dear, if you know so much, I needn't try to enlighten you; so we will talk of something else—yourself, for instance. I don't much more than half believe that it is you; I feel a desire to pinch you occasionally, to convince myself that you

are flesh and blood, and not one of those airy nothings that have appeared to me so often in my dreams, in your semblance."

"You may pinch me as much as you like; it might help me to a better realization of my own identity."

"Do tell—oh! how many things I do need to hear all in a breath. I can't bear to think of those interminable months;—did every day seem like forty? how did you spend them? what *could* you do to make them endurable?"

"You haven't given up asking a long string of questions, without giving a fellow a chance to answer any of them," said Henry, laughing; "and I am glad you haven't; it is good to find you just the same!"

"Don't you think I have improved a bit?—you haven't had a chance to judge, though; so I take back that question for the present. Did you expect to find us all just as we are—alive and well and unchanged?"

"I did think that perhaps I might find you married, Bess."

"You didn't! don't tell me that, when you know I have been sworn to spinsterhood since I could talk. What nonsense! Tell me—don't you feel like a sort of Rip Van Winkle? as if you had been asleep for twenty years?"

"No, I can't say that I do. I am very conscious of having been awake a due proportion of the twenty-one months."

"Of course Edith Craighhead's being with you on the island must have made a great difference, and those islanders were so nice. If anybody whom I didn't know very well had told me of such an island, and its ideally amiable inhabitants, I should have thought he romanced a little, and made some allowance. What if they had been cannibals! Is Edith as pretty as she used to be?"

"I shouldn't call her *pretty*," answered Henry.

"I used to think her as beautiful as an *'owery*,' as I called it, in my days of romance and poetry-worship. Has mamma asked you if you were in love with Edith?"

"No," answered Henry.

"Well, she will, for she said, in talking of your letter, that it would be the most surprising thing if you and Edith had been thrown together so much—been so dependent upon each other, and had such strange experiences in common—without becoming more than friends. I didn't think it would be surprising, in the least; you know I always have held that young men and women needn't necessarily fall in love because they have a chance; and then I reminded mamma of a certain young lady"—

"A foolish, boyish fancy!" exclaimed Henry; "it makes me cringe to think of it."

"Does it? I am glad, for I never did approve of it. Time enough for you to find your fate half-a-dozen years hence. I don't believe in early marriages. I think mamma will be rather relieved to know it."

"What—to know what, Bess?"

"Why, that you are heart-whole, and will belong to us and nobody else, for the present. You must tell her the first chance you have," said Bessie, conscious that she had rather jumped at a conclusion.

"But I cannot tell her so, Bessie," said Henry earnestly, though his voice trembled. "I *do* love Edith Craighead."

Bessie confronted him, laying her hands on his shoulders for an instant without speaking. His face was flushed and full of feeling, but he met her look steadily.

"Of course I love her," he said at length. "I should be more or less than human if I did not, when she has been my friend in greatest need, my—everything that a true woman can be to a man; and—oh, Bessie! if you had ever *seen* her, you would not have needed to ask if I love her."

"I dare say, dear Henry," exclaimed Bessie, wiping away the tears that had come in spite of herself, "and I am glad; I don't know why I have shed even these two or three tears, for I am very glad, and congratulate you with all my heart," and she drew her brother's face down and kissed him. "Spinster-elect as I am, I can imagine how happy you must be in loving such a woman, and being loved by her."

"I—I am afraid,"—Henry began, and then stopped; but his tone and manner filled Bessie with apprehension, and she drew him to a seat on a grassy knoll, just back from the shore.

She held his hand close in both her own, and neither spoke for a time, but looked over the blue, sunny waters.

"What are you afraid of?" asked Bessie, when she could wait no longer.

"I am not sure that Edith loves me," answered Henry in a low tone.

"She does! she must!" cried Bessie. "How can you doubt it?"

"I have no reason to think she does—more than as a friend."

"Have you not asked her?"

"No—no! do you dream that I could yet?—If she knows that I love her, it is because I could not hide it from her."

"Henry, my dear brother," said Bessie, her heart sinking like lead, as she divined what terrible cloud was shadowing

Henry's sky, "you are mistaken—you are wronging Edith, as well as yourself. You are letting a false notion of honor stand between you, and risking her happiness as well as your own."

"You must not tempt me, Bessie," said Henry, sadly. "I have had a long time to think of it, and I am sure I am right. Sometimes I feel that I *never* can tell her—never can ask for her love;—that even when I have—paid my debt, the stain of the dishonor will cling to me, and make me unworthy to aspire to a heart so high and pure as Edith's."

"If she could not love you in spite of all, her heart is not worth having," cried Bessie. "I should *despise* her! Men never do see these things as women do," she went on, not heeding Henry's exclamation. "Don't you know that if there is even a *possibility* that she loves you—as if there were a *doubt*!—it is only fair for you to tell her what your feelings are for her, and not leave her to torture herself with fears and uncertainties?"

"If I were *worthy*—it would be different."

"Your soul is as high and pure as hers."

"Bessie!"

"Hush! I will say it!—it is, and she would say so, too. Many a man that has had a fall at the outset, has run the race as nobly, and won the goal as surely, as others who find no stumbling-blocks in the way. If Edith is what you think her, and what I believe her to be, she does not trust you the less perfectly, knowing that your one failure will be a life-long grief to you, and an incentive to more earnest and careful running of the race."

There was a long pause, and then Bessie said:

"Promise me—you must promise me, that you will put aside this false notion—that you will not let it stand between you and happiness."

"I can only promise to think of what you have said—I *have* thought of it all; every wish and hope and impulse of my heart plead on your side."

"Truth and justice, and everything kind and good plead with you, as I do. Edith herself, the embodiment of all, demands of you not to do her such grievous injustice."

"Oh, Bessie! I don't know;—I am base and dishonored—in the eyes of the world, at least;—it cannot be that I have a right to try to link any woman's fate with mine—least of all *her's*. Oh, God!—to be free, to be able to stand before my fellow-men, and before her, unstained and pure!"

Henry covered his face with his hands, and his frame shook with the sobs that he could not restrain. Bessie could say

nothing—such suffering was beyond the power of words to help or soothe.

After a few minutes Henry raised his head.

“Bessie,” he said, “it will be a comfort to feel that you know about it, but no one else must know, and we will not talk of it again until I have thought it over calmly—as calmly as I can—and have decided. God knows I desire to do right.”

“Of course He knows it, darling; and you will be happy; things must come right in the end—if I could but have the arranging for a little while!”—she added, under her breath.

Bessie’s heart rebelled on account of her friends’ trials far more than her own. She was apt to say, “I cannot have it so!” and “It is not just!” when those she loved suffered, when she would have borne the same pain, herself, with patience and fortitude.

The talk soon turned to other things; there was a great deal to be told and heard on both sides, that had no reference to the sad subject they had dropped for the present, and before they reached the village again they were outwardly cheerful.

After dinner, they and Stephen and their mother sat at one end of the piazza, talking of plans for the afternoon. At the other end Mrs. Tenny and two or three other ladies had gathered, for a little after-dinner gossip. In his own room, which opened on the piazza, sat Mr. Schuyler. The blinds were closed, but the window was open, and as usual, he heard the voices outside without giving them a thought, or hearing a word, until his own name, and immediately after, Miss Hollister’s, arrested his attention; and he hardly thought it worth while to disturb himself for the sake of not hearing what was said next.

“I suppose he dined with his sister, over the way,” Mrs. Tenny’s voice replied to the question that was asked. “He played croquet with Puss till nearly dinner-time—and by the way! I must tell you! You know how eager Miss Hollister has been to monopolize Mr. Schuyler’s attentions?”

“Yes,” was answered, rather doubtfully.

“Well, this morning she waylaid him at the beach, and kept him talking a long time, though he had told Puss he was going in bathing at the usual time. Pretty soon she spied Puss, and tried to lure Mr. Schuyler into a walk with her and that brother! Puss said it was as good as a play to see her turn away in such hot haste, expecting Mr. Schuyler to follow, and to see him coolly lift his hat, and then stand there looking after her, with his sarcastic smile. He came back with Puss to play croquet.”

The ladies laughed appreciatively, and one of them asked:

“Are they going away to-morrow?”

“Yes,” Mrs. Tenny replied. “I don’t know how it seems to any one else; but I must say I regard it as the most complete effrontery for a family with such a disgrace attached to their name, to come here and hold their heads so high.”

“I think so too.”

“So do I.”

“Does Mr. Schuyler know about it now—about the brother?”

“Yes, he does now; he and Puss were talking about it this morning. I dare say he went over to dine with his sister to avoid sitting by Miss Hollister.”

Mr. Schuyler waited to hear no more; and the ladies were electrified about five minutes later, by seeing him walk out upon the piazza, and join the Hollisters. Miss Tenny, who stood in the doorway, and had been anxiously awaiting his return, was electrified too, and exclaimed, “Oh, Mr. Schuyler!” and followed him a few steps. But he paid no heed, and she had the pleasure of hearing him say, after he had made an inquiry as to Mrs. Hollister’s health:

“I am very sorry that you are to leave us so soon.”

“I begin to feel that it will be very pleasant to be settled at home once more, and not have the trouble and confusion in prospect,” Mrs. Hollister replied.

“I begin to be impatient, myself, to get back to town; my holiday has been such an unusually long one,” said Mr. Schuyler. “I wish, Mrs. Hollister, you would allow me the pleasure of taking you over to the Harbor to-morrow. I am sure you would find my sister’s carriage more agreeable than the stage, and my sister will be happy to go with us.”

“Thank you, Mr. Schuyler, I shall be very glad to accept your kindness. I have had experience of the comfort of your sister’s carriage, and have a great dread of the stage.”

“Miss Hollister prefers it, and has declined my invitation,” said Mr. Schuyler.

“Prefers the stage! why Bessie, what a strange fancy!”

“I know it, mamma; but you know I never do prefer what a civilized person might be expected to.”

“I am sure you will suffer for your perverse fancy, in this case,” said Mr. Schuyler; “and there is still time for you to change your mind, as the fourth seat is still unprovided for.”

“No, thank you,” replied Bessie; “my liking for stages is a reality; I always have been indignant at modern innovations, and there is no telling when I can indulge my taste again. Besides, I think I ought to look after my brothers.”

At this point, finding the conversation turning on indifferent subjects, Miss Tenny drew near :

"Oh, Miss Hollister," she exclaimed, "you *must* play croquet once more ; if you are *really* going to-morrow this will be your last chance, you know, and you and your brother, and Mr. Schuyler and I, and one more, would make a game of six. I am so anxious to redeem my reputation ! You are bound to help me, Mr. Schuyler," she said, shaking her finger at him, "you played so badly this morning ; and I am afraid, after Miss Hollister is gone, you will have no heart for anything ! Come, all of you ; ma is keeping the ground for us."

Bessie replied, her face burning with indignation at Miss Tenny's untasteful speech, that she had packing to do, and must be excused.

"Oh, Miss Hollister ! do your packing this evening," cried Miss Tenny ; "tumble your things in anyhow. I do, when I'm going home."

"Thank you, but I really must be excused."

"I'm *so* sorry ! but we can have a game of four, if the gentlemen will come."

"I have letters to write, Miss Tenny, and must forego the pleasure," said Mr. Schuyler.

"Well," sighed Miss Tenny, "then I must give it up, and find some other way to dispose of the afternoon."

No one made any suggestion, and so she proceeded to the next thing on her programme :

"I wanted to ask you, Miss Hollister, if you are going in the stage to-morrow ?"

"Yes."

"Would there be room for me, do you think ?—ma would go too, I suppose, as I couldn't come home alone—room for ma and me ?"

"So far as I know," replied Bessie, "there will be no lack of room. My brothers and I could not very well fill the stage."

"No, I suppose not," laughed Miss Tenny, "and I only hope there won't be a crowd from the other houses. Do you know of any one going from over the way, Mr. Schuyler ?"

"No, I do not, Miss Tenny."

"Well, then, I think I may count on going. I've been wishing to for an age. I want to match some worsted, and it will be *so* nice to go with you, Miss Hollister."

Bessie gave but slight response, and as Mrs. Hollister made a move to leave the piazza, Mr. Schuyler asked if she would be able to see his sister by-and-by : she was intending to call upon her and Miss Hollister that afternoon.

Some of the young ladies, who had been furtively watching affairs from a distance, were quite triumphant at seeing Henry Hollister go up-stairs with his mother and sister, Stephen stroll off towards the woods, and—above all—at seeing Mr. Schuyler cross the street to his sister's, so that Miss Tenny was left to seek other society.

In the evening, Mrs. Hollister sat in the parlor, as she could not bear the night air, and Stephen sat with her. Mr. Schuyler was with them, for a time, and then went outside ; and having discovered Bessie and Henry in an obscure corner of the piazza, walked back and forth at the other end. Bessie was seated so that she could not see him ; but Henry saw him, and with the fellow-feeling that makes people wondrous discerning, as well as kind, watched him, wondering how he could manage to give him the opportunity he was sure he desired, for a chat with Bessie. At last he left her, saying, "Excuse me a moment, Bess ; I am going in to speak to mother. Wait till I come back."

Bessie sat in a quiet revery, never suspecting that her own brother was acting the part of a manœverer ; and when footsteps approached, she said, "Well, dear, I think you spoke to mamma ; you had time to settle a great deal."

She was thankful for the darkness, when she turned to see why Henry did not take his seat, and recognized Mr. Schuyler.

"Oh, it is you, is it, Mr. Schuyler ? I thought it was my brother ; he left me a moment ago to see mamma."

"Yes—but will you not wait for him here," Mr. Schuyler asked, as Bessie rose from her chair.

"I think I will go and find him ; he may have forgotten my existence," said Bessie.

"Don't go this minute," urged Mr. Schuyler. "I have something to—to say. I want to congratulate you," he added hastily, as Bessie seemed more than ever bent upon going away.

She stopped then : "I know there are a great many things in the possession of which I am very fortunate ; but for which do you think I am to be especially felicitated ?"

Mr. Schuyler was not, in his secret heart, fully convinced of the truth of Miss Tenny's representation, though if any one had intimated that he was taking this means of discovering whether it were true or false, he would have scouted the reflection upon his straightforwardness. He was sufficiently disturbed and anxious to be possessed with a semblance of conviction, and to be unconscious of using artifice.

"If I am referring to what I am not supposed or desired to know," he replied, "I can only beg your pardon; but it was mentioned to me so much as a matter of course, and as a fact so generally understood, that I could only wonder I had remained in ignorance so long."

"If your object is to mystify me, you are succeeding perfectly. But as I hate riddles, and never guessed one in my life, will you be so good as to tell me what you mean?"

"I see I have made a great blunder," said Mr. Schuyler, "but it cannot be helped now. I wish you joy of your engagement."

Whatever else Bessie may have felt, her tone expressed simple curiosity.

"My engagement?—oh, to teach, I suppose. I am fortunate in that; it keeps me out of mischief, and supplies me with the necessaries of life—dresses, bonnets, gloves, and so on. That is my only engagement of any importance."

"Miss Hollister," said Mr. Schuyler, eagerly, "is it true that you are not engaged—to be married?"

"It is as true as that the stars shine, that I am not, and"—

"I congratulate *myself*, then. You cannot imagine how relieved I am," Mr. Schuyler said.

"—And that I never shall be," said Bessie, quietly, as if she had not noticed the interruption.

"You cannot be so sure of that," returned Mr. Schuyler, with rather less gladness in his voice.

"Yes, I can. I know very well how much I love my freedom. I have been determined on that point ever since I was old enough to determine anything."

"Young ladies have been known to change their minds."

"Yes, I have known instances—young ladies who don't know their own minds, or who haven't much of any mind to know, sometimes make such statements, and, I suppose, think themselves sincere; but I don't consider that I belong to either class."

"You must have better reasons than a mere whim or fancy. May I ask if it is your paramount and absorbing love for your mother and brothers—a sense of duty to them? or have you an idea of a sphere—a calling? I have sometimes thought you had."

"Yes, I have," replied Bessie, after a pause. "I like to teach, and I hope to have leisure, some time, to study and write. I detest the dull routine of domestic life—a taste as unaccountable, perhaps, as my liking a creaking old stage better than a

handsome phaeton. Mind, I think the mistress of a home holds as honorable a position as any a woman can fill, and I think it requires as much brains to be a perfect housekeeper, as a teacher or student or writer. But it is not my mission, and I dare say I should turn against anybody who tried to convince me that it was."

"But as the queen of a home, where you were not troubled with the 'dull routine,' but had plenty of leisure for your favorite pursuits?"—

"Queens of homes are imaginary beings—at least they are too apt to prove so. When the glamour of romance is gone, a faded, care-worn, commonplace woman, or a careless, inefficient blue-stocking appears, instead of the regal creature who was to rule by her sovereign word, and have nothing to do but grace her position and improve her mind. She worries herself into an invalid, or develops a higher type of womanhood by means of sharp discipline.—I would not count him a friend who tried to change my purpose. I love my own identity and individuality, too, and never would consent to lose it in anybody's else."

Before the silence was broken again, Henry came for Bessie, with many apologies for having left her so long, and Miss Tenny followed to beg them all to come and have a dance. Under cover of the darkness, Mr. Schuyler escaped to his own room, and Bessie excused herself to finish her packing.

If Miss Tenny's dependence for a pleasant ride to the Harbor had been Bessie's conversation, she would have been disappointed; or even if it had been a great deal of attention from Stephen and Henry. But she had a secret solace for all trials in going, in the firm expectation of driving back in the phaeton. Her mother had been prevented from going, at the last moment, by a severe headache, and of course she would not be left to ride alone in the stage, when there would be two empty seats in the phaeton. Her little plans worked well, except that Mr. Schuyler seemed absorbed in driving, on their return, and left her to be entertained by his sister.

As Mr. Schuyler shook hands with Bessie on the little steamboat, he said, "May I not come to see you as a friend?"

"I cannot say, Yes—I should be glad to, but I—I have very little leisure for visitors. I am afraid I must say No."

"You are very hard upon me," said Mr. Schuyler.

"I don't mean to be—I mean to be only kind."

"I thought you would—well, I will not trouble you. Good-by."

"Hard upon *him*!" Bessie said to herself, as she sat on deck,

and watched the receding shore and the green waves, and thought of the look Mr. Schuyler had given her when he said good-by; "What am I to myself then? cruel—a monster of cruelty! But I shall abide by it—I never was made for anything but a humdrum school-teacher. I deserve to be punished, too, for being so weak—to think what a paltroun I have proved!—I shall work and forget; and he—no man ever yet broke his heart for any woman."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE MEETING.

"Oh for the pencil of a ready artist!" said Mrs. William Craighead, coming out on the piazza one morning, about three weeks after Edith's return, and considering the picture that presented itself to her admiring eyes.

"Are we an effective group?" asked Edith.

"Very; nothing could be more so. You would do perfectly for the impersonation of happiness; all those bright flowers in your lap are fulfilled hopes and wishes;—Zandy and Helen, at your feet, are your handmaidens, and Dick and Royal, stretched down there on the grass—well, they are fair samples of the carpet knights of the present day. Corrie! have you left a single flower in the garden?"

"Yes, lots," answered Corrie, climbing the steps, holding her apron by the corners. "I wouldn't pick so many for anybody but Aunt Edith; but I know grandmamma wishes her to have everything, because she's been drowned so long."

Everybody laughed, and declared she was quite right, and the little girl emptied the contents of her apron into Edith's lap, which was already well supplied with salvia, geraniums, roses, verbenas, and other late summer flowers, the fruit of a previous forage of the garden.

"Oh, dear me, I *do* think they're *beautiful!*" cried Corrie, clasping her hands in an ecstasy, as she stood for a moment to contemplate the enchanting mass of gay colors.

"So do I, Corrie dear," said Edith; "the poorest little flower of them all is lovelier to me than you can imagine."

"I have a letter from William, Edith," said Louisa, "that I want to talk to you about—if you will come to my room by-and-by; and Zandy, I shall depend upon you to take Helen up stairs in half an hour; it will be time for her to lie down then."

"Yes, aunty, I'll attend to her," said Zandy.

"Dick and I will make a chair of our hands, and carry her up," said Royal.

"If Miss Forbes were here, Helen," said Dick, "she could lift you in her arms and run up stairs with you as if you were a baby. I wish she were here, this minute; I want to see her!"

"We shall all be glad to know her," said Edith. "Her letter said she should arrive Saturday, and to-day is Thursday; so you have not long to wait, Dick. "Mother, dear!" she cried, starting up as her mother appeared at the door.

But Corrie threw her arms about her and held her back: "Oh! oh!" she cried; "don't move, darling! you will spill the flowers."

"Well, then, mother, you must come to me. How long it is since I have seen you!"

"Three-quarters of an hour by the clock," said her mother, kissing her.

"I cannot have time counted by the clock, mother, when you are out of my sight. I can't feel perfectly sure of things yet, when I don't see all your faces."

"My darling! there are such common places as factories and housekeeping, that must be looked after," replied her mother, with a quiver in her voice.

A very merry talk followed, in the midst of which Zandy suddenly remembered her aunt's charge:

"Helen!" she cried, "it must be more than half an hour! what will Aunt Louisa say to me?"

"Come on, Dick; let's carry her up."

Royal and Dick sprang up the steps, and went into the house with the girls; but Zandy came running back.

"Grandma," she cried, eagerly, "Mr. Boyd is just coming in at the front gate! I'll bring him right out here, shan't I? he will be so amazed to see Aunt Edith!"

She ran back without waiting for a reply, and Corrie jumped up and down and clapped her hands, crying, "Oh! oh! how nice!"

"Corrie! hush, dear!" said Mrs. Craighead, as Zandy's voice was heard in the hall. "Edith, I will take Mr. Boyd into the drawing-room, and you can come—when you have got rid of your flowers."

She gave Edith an anxious, inquiring glance, and was only in time to waylay Zandy and Mr. Boyd before they reached the door, and lead the way to the drawing-room.

"Where is Aunt Edith, grandmamma?" asked Zandy; "why doesn't she come in? I'll go and get her."

"My dear, Aunt Edith will be in presently. You had better go and see if you can do anything for Helen."

Zandy was not at all pleased at being sent away, but went, nevertheless, and Mrs. Craighead turned to Mr. Boyd:

"You have returned sooner than you intended, have you not? Your vacation is not ended, is it?"

"No—I—it is sooner than I expected to return—but"—

"I hope you have been well, and enjoying your rest?"

"I have been perfectly well, and have found rest a great luxury," replied Mr. Boyd, trying to recover the self-possession which Mrs. Craighead's cold politeness had disturbed.

"You have heard," said Mrs. Craighead, after a little pause, "of the happy—the wonderful restoration of my daughter to us; I think William said he had written to you."

"Yes—the letter only reached me a few days ago, as I was travelling. It is, indeed, a wonderful event."

"We are all very happy in it," said Mrs. Craighead.

"You will accept my warmest congratulations," said Mr. Boyd, hating the cold words as he uttered them. "It must be a great joy."

"Very great—inexpressible!" returned Mrs. Craighead, struggling to maintain the formal manner she had chosen to assume.

"Is she well? is she much changed?" asked Mr. Boyd, and the tone of his voice put the mother more than ever on her guard.

"She is very well, and very little changed, except—except that her poor hair has turned white. No one could experience what my daughter has, however, and bear it as she has done, without developing greatly in character."

"No, surely not."

The brief silence that followed was broken by the entrance of Edith herself. Followed by her mother's anxious gaze, she crossed the room with quiet grace to offer her hand to Mr. Boyd, who stood as if the power of speech and motion had deserted him. He took Edith's hand, and looked into her eyes without a word.

"Have you no welcome for me?" she asked, smiling, "or are you trying to decide whether it is really your old friend?"

"Do you not think she looks much the same?" asked Mrs. Craighead, drawing near, and putting her arm about Edith. "You must remember her distinctly enough to judge."

Mr. Boyd dropped Edith's hand: "I see but little change."

"Sit here, my love—out of the draught," said Mrs. Craighead; and Edith sat down with her back to the light, and quite apart from Mr. Boyd.

"You have been at home three weeks, have you not?" asked Mr. Boyd, and his voice sounded hollow and constrained.

"Yes; it will be three weeks to-morrow," answered Edith.

"I suppose William told you that his sister arrived some days before Mr. Craighead and I and the children returned from the mountains?" Mrs. Craighead said.

"Yes, he mentioned it."

"We came unexpectedly, as the letter Mr. Craighead had written to announce our coming went astray, and we found my daughter here."

"It must have been—surprises can be so joyful as to be painful."

Mrs. Craighead looked at Edith, but made no reply.

"William telegraphed to Louisa, to prepare her mind, and still she persisted for some time in regarding me as an apparition," Edith said.

"Had you a pleasant journey?" asked Mr. Boyd.

"From New-York, do you mean?"

"No—I referred to your sea-voyage."

"We had few severe storms, but we had head-winds nearly all the time, so that our progress was slow."

"You can hardly conceive of a voyage of three months as '*pleasant*' to one who had not seen her home for nearly four years, and whose poor heart was torn with longings," said Mrs. Craighead, with reproach in her voice.

"It must have been very tedious," said Mr. Boyd.

"It was a great comfort to feel that I was actually on my way home," said Edith, "and certain of reaching it, sooner or later. And then I had pleasant companions—a gentleman and his wife, who were returning home from China, and Mr. Hollister."

"Mr. Hollister?" repeated Mr. Boyd, inquiringly.

"Yes; did not William tell you the strange circumstance—such a happy one for me?"

Speaking of her brother in connection with Henry had recalled an unwelcome memory, and the possibility that Mr. Boyd might recall it as well, made her cheeks flush and her eyes fall. But she recovered herself in a moment, and went on: "He was left on my island—I shall always consider it mine—by the ship in which he sailed for China.—The same ship came for us on her return voyage."

"I am very glad if there were any alleviating circumstances in your hard fate," said Mr. Boyd.

"I should be very ungrateful if I did not acknowledge a great many," said Edith, earnestly. "In looking back now," she added, her loving eyes fixed on her mother's face, "at my beautiful little island and its gentle inhabitants, my dear friends, and all the sweetnesses that came into my exile, almost in spite of myself—I can feel only happy and thankful. These weeks at home have compensated—more than compensated, for all I suffered from homesickness."

Mr. Boyd said not a word, neither did he raise his eyes to the lovely face, so much lovelier in its maturity, than even as he had known it. Tears filled Mrs. Craighead's eyes; she was not yet able to think of her child's sufferings with calmness, hardly with resignation. After a slight pause, Edith said:

"One of the greatest alleviations of my exile was Mr. Hollister's society—that is, of the last year of it. His having lived in Oxley made him doubly welcome and helpful. I don't like to think what that year would have been to me if he had not come with tidings from home, and given me—mother dear! I will not talk of myself ever again, if you look so sad over my troubles that are all past; and now I am only foolishly conjuring up trials that I never had to bear at all."

Edith uttered her tender remonstrances, forgetful of any presence but her mother's, and then added to Mr. Boyd, "I sometimes think mother really suffers as much for me as I suffered myself. I only wish it might trouble her as little now as it does me."

"It is one of the penalties she pays for—loving you so much," Mr. Boyd replied, rising to take his leave.

"Shall you spend the rest of your vacation in Oxley?" Mrs. Craighead asked.

"I think not—I shall probably leave town to-morrow."

"When you return, then, you will come and see us. I suppose it will be before William's family leave us."

"Thank you—I hope so."

A deadly sense of disappointment and loss oppressed Mr. Boyd as he left the house. The wonderful days, since he had heard the tidings of Edith's actual existence and presence in her home, seemed like a far-off glory, and the half-hour he had spent with Mrs. Craighead and Edith like a deep, dark chasm, separating him from that glory forever.

The boundless hope and gladness that had possessed him until he had come to that half-hour, seemed now like the grossest presumption, with no better foundation or excuse than that he, loving one whose loveliness he had never seen equalled, had continued to love her during four short years. He had taken everything that he wished for granted, and how was his presumption being punished! He had never even had a pledge of faith from her he loved, and yet had claimed her heart in his thoughts, as if it were bound to him by the most sacred ties.

A keen sense of dissatisfaction with himself, in connection with the visit, added to his wretchedness. "Unexampled stupidity!"—"Tongue-tied schoolboy!"—"Brainless dolt!" were some of the epithets he applied to himself and his be-

havior, as he walked down the garden-path, every nerve tingling with mortification at the thought of his utter failure in self-possession, and in saying anything that was to the purpose, or in the least worth saying. He felt as impatient to leave Oxley as he had been to reach it, and did depart that afternoon, in some doubt whether he ever could come back.

When left alone with Edith, Mrs. Craighead began nervously to arrange the chairs, and the books upon the table, avoiding a sight of Edith's face, lest she should discover evidence there of what she had been determined to ignore, and yet painfully longing for some assurance that she had done no harm. She had no doubt of Sydney's suffering, but she felt strangely indifferent to that as yet; every other thought and interest was swallowed up in her anxiety to believe that Edith did not love her old friend more than as a friend—that any feeling she might have had for him in the old days had died out, and that she should have her daughter to herself for a long time, at least, if not always.

"Do you think Mr. Boyd has altered much, dear?" she asked, as Edith stood before an oil painting, apparently absorbed in examining its details.

"Very little, mother. I believe he seems rather older, and perhaps more quiet and grave; but his face has hardly changed at all.—How long it seems, mother, since I painted this picture. I think one's perceptions grow, even when one has no means of cultivating them. I can see faults in this old work of mine that I never suspected before, and I am sure I can improve it—at least, after a little practice with my brushes."

"I dare say, dearest.—Four years of work and responsibility would naturally tell in Sydney's looks and manner. I think he does seem older."

"Yes—naturally enough, it would tell.—I must leave you now for a while, mother dear. Louisa asked me to come to her room to hear William's letter, and she must think I have forgotten it altogether."

"Let me see first, my darling!" said her mother, taking Edith's face between her hands.

"See what, mother?" asked Edith, smiling into her mother's wistful eyes.

"If you are quite happy, dear, and satisfied!" said Mrs. Craighead, so anxious to know what was in her daughter's secret heart, that she could hardly restrain the direct questions which she felt it would be so unwise to ask.

"Happy and satisfied, mother? why! how can you ask? Haven't I been in the seventh heaven of content? and can you

imagine me so unreasonable and ungrateful as not to be there still?"

"I feel so exacting for you, my love—I feel that you ought to have so much happiness to make up for the past"—said Mrs. Craighead tenderly, and with a sharp pang of remorse, as she thought that her selfish love would, if possible, shut away one source of happiness.

"Never fear, dear mother, but I shall have all I can bear," answered Edith; and she kissed her mother, and went up stairs.

She found, to her dismay, that her brother's letter proposed a plan which involved new separations. The doctors whom he had consulted in regard to Helen, since his return to New York, all advised a complete change, and his plan was to go to Europe in October, and to take not only his wife and Helen, but Royal and Dick and Zandy. "Mr. Hollister is quite willing to go, indeed is very glad to," the letter said, "so that the boys can go on with their studies without interruption, and I believe with especial advantages; and I am sure father and mother will consent to part with Alexandra, now that they have Edith, for the sake of letting poor Helen have the benefit of a companion of her own age, and one whom she loves as she does Zandy."

"Of course I shall not consent to leave Grace behind!" Louisa said; "William seems to have forgotten her entirely, but I could not think of leaving her. It will be a formidable undertaking—so many of us leaving home together, and I dread to think of letting father and mother know about it; but, as William suggests, they must feel it less for having you, and we must consider Helen's health first.—You know, dear, how poor Cornelia improved at Mentone."

"Yes, I know—she was well when we left Mentone," said Edith sadly, turning her thoughts from the terrible sequel as quickly as possible, and trying to see only the bright side—the probable benefit to Helen.

"We talked of it somewhat when William was here—he saw so much more plainly than I did how poorly Helen was, not having seen her in several weeks; but we could make no definite plans until William had seen physicians after he got back to New York; and I can't tell how glad I am that he is willing to take so many of us, it will make it so much more cheerful for Helen. I know she will feel sad enough at leaving the rest of you."

"October will soon be here," said Edith, with an actual shudder at the thought of the parting. "I feel sorry about

Miss Forbes's visit—it seems a pity that she should come just now.”

“I am inclined to think that it will prove a welcome diversion for us all. She must be such a bright-hearted woman, that I believe her presence will be a help, rather than otherwise. Oh, here is an item that I forgot to read to you. William says, ‘Tell Edith that her proud and obstinate friend was proud and obstinate to the last, and yesterday took his place in Orton Brothers' shipping house. I regret it very much, for I like him more than ever, and would have given him his old post gladly, but I can't help admiring the fellow's independence. He says he would rather earn the money from some one else that he pays to me.’”

CHAPTER XXIV.

OLD AND NEW.

“WELL, Zandy, can Carrie come?”

“No, grandmamma; at least she thinks she can't, poor thing—it's such a shame!”

It had been decided to improve this warm, sunny day, by showing Miss Forbes the island and Jacques's tower, Black Pool, and other places of interest about the lake. Even Helen was to have a row on the lake, Miss Forbes having persuaded her mother to trust to her special care, promising to bring her home before she was tired.

They were all gathered on the piazza, waiting for Johnny to inform them that the boats were ready, when Zandy came hurrying back from Carrie's.

“I am getting up a great sympathy for your friend, Zandy, without having seen her,” said Miss Forbes. “It seems to me you never speak of her, except with some expression of commiseration appended.”

“I will just tell you how I found her this morning, and then you will see what good reason I have for saying, ‘poor thing!’” Zandy replied. “In the first place, you must know that her cook's grandmother is very ill with ‘*neurology*,’ and Carrie had to let Sarah go and take care of her, and Mr. Reynolds and Martin—Martin is the oldest son—are as cross as bears if everything isn't as nice as when Sarah was there. I rang the bell till I was tired, and then went in, and looked into the dining-room—you never saw such a place! Two of the children were there playing, and the floor was covered with all sorts of rubbish. They said Carrie was upstairs, so I went to find her, and there she was, looking so tired and worried, waiting on her mother, who was in one of her ‘dreadful turns,’ as she calls them, though nobody knows what they are; and Susie was fretting because Carrie didn't go to sewing on a new muslin dress that she wants to wear to-morrow, and Charlie lay on the floor crying with the tooth-ache, and”—

“Oh!” cried Edith, “is there more to come in Carrie's chapter of troubles?”

“Yes, the baby was crying, too, and the nurse was down

stairs, doing Sarah's work. I took the baby into the nursery and shamed Susie into trying to keep him quiet, and then found some laudanum to put in Charlie's tooth; and by that time Mrs. Reynolds was a 'little easier,' and Carrie was allowed to speak to me, and I gave her the invitation. 'What is the use of asking me, Zandy?' she said, in a tone of perfect despair. 'You know I can't go.' I tried to make her think she ought to come, and let them do without her as they could. Why should she give up everything for them?"

"Why, indeed!" ejaculated Miss Forbes.

"She never has a minute to herself," Zandy added; "Susie and Martha sleep in her room, and keep their playthings there; while Mart has his own room to himself, and the spare room for his *study*, besides!"

"Poor child!" said Miss Forbes; "in my opinion there is nothing so wearing to soul and body, as the feeling that one can never be alone. If there is no help for that, there is no help for her."

"I don't understand it," said Helen; "Carrie's letters to you, Zandy, were so cheerful and hopeful last winter;—what does make things so dismal now?"

"It needs more than the influence of one young girl, however earnest her efforts may be, to stem the tide of disorder and misrule in a family like the Reynoldses," said Mrs. William Craighead.

"No doubt her good influence will be felt by the younger children, and be evident by-and-by, though it all seems so vain now," Edith said.

"I think they are hopeless cases, every one," Zandy declared, "and I wish Carrie would give them up now, and go to Mr. Chandler's."

"Oh no, Zandy," exclaimed Helen.

"Oh yes, Helen," Zandy responded. "Why, you don't know half what trouble she has."

"What about her going to Mr. Chandler's?" asked Miss Forbes.

Zandy told of Mr. Chandler's plan for Carrie, and Miss Forbes said she thought Carrie ought to have taken advantage of such an opportunity for self-improvement: "I never did believe in sacrificing one's soul for the good of one's fellow-beings," she declared.

"Why, Miss Forbes," cried Zandy, "you don't think Carrie has done that?"

"So far as its beauty and progress are concerned, she has, if her trials are so rasping and oppressive that she can't rise above

them—if they weigh more and more heavily upon her, and are slowly crushing all the sweetness out of her nature."

"I suppose there is such a thing as undertaking more than one is able to accomplish in the way of helping others," said Mrs. Craighead, "but I cannot believe that Carrie will fail, because her duty seemed so plain. She needs advice and help; but it is a delicate matter to meddle with strictly family affairs, and attempt to guard her against home wrongs and oppressions."

"I suppose Carrie doesn't know, poor child," said Edith, "that to give and give, and yield and yield to selfish demands, is to cultivate selfishness in others. There are certainly duties to ourselves that cannot be set aside, even for duties to our friends."

"There comes Johnny," said Helen, "so I suppose the boys are ready for us."

"Now, let me suggest a plan for saving all this child's strength for the row," said Miss Forbes, putting her arm around Helen to detain her, as she started down the steps with the others. "She shall be borne in state down to the water; this bamboo chair will be just the thing for a palanquin."

"A very kind thought, Miss Forbes," said Helen's mother. "Johnny, run and ask Royal and Dick to come and carry Helen."

"No, no!" cried Miss Forbes, "let Rachel and me do it; it will save time, you know."

"Very well—you shall have your own way."

Zandy was to have gone in the little boat with Miss Forbes and Helen; but when Miss Forbes's arrangements for Helen's comfort were completed, there was no room left for her, and so she went in the other.

Helen's face, as they put off from shore, was a pleasant sight to her mother, who had come down to see them off—it was so full of happiness. If they had chosen from all the days in the year, they could not have hit upon a lovelier one. The air and the sky might have been borrowed from summer, while a blue haze rested on the more distant hills; the woods were radiant in the vivid coloring of autumn, and from the shores of the lake they were so clearly reflected in the water, that Helen said it was like sailing above the gardens of the mermaids. Here and there a scarlet vine, that lent a brief glow to the gray faces of The Brothers, seemed to float on the water, near enough and real enough for one to put forth a hand and gather it.

Helen was not to go within The Gate, to feel the deep cold shadow of the jealous hills; but she looked in, and they made

the circuit of the island, marked every point of the lake with which Helen had any pleasant memory, and were back at the foot of the lawn just when she was beginning to feel that she had enjoyed almost as much as she could bear for once.

The other boat's load had landed on the island; and Miss Forbes was to join them there, when she had delivered Helen to her mother.

"Why! there is Mr. Chandler!" exclaimed Helen, as they pulled up to the little pier.

"Where is Mr. Chandler?" asked Miss Forbes, busy with her oars.

"Coming across the lawn; and there are grandma and mamma, on the piazza, watching us;"—and she waved her handkerchief to them.

"All very true," said Miss Forbes, having taken an observation.

"How do you do, Miss Forbes and Helen?" called Mr. Chandler, sometime before he reached the landing.

"We are very well," replied Miss Forbes; "how do *you* do?"

"My health is excellent, thank you. Can I be of any service?"

"Yes, you can help me carry my little princess up to the palace. I see the palanquin is here, but the slaves are not at hand."

"That is what I came for, chiefly, having learned that such service could be rendered; but can I do nothing else?"

"No, everything is done," replied Miss Forbes, springing from the boat, and helping Helen out.

"Now we will shake hands, and that will finish up the formalities," said Mr. Chandler.

"With pleasure," replied Miss Forbes, returning his hearty grasp. "How did you know that I was Miss Forbes?" she asked, as they bore Helen's chair between them;—"oh, I suppose they told you at the house—a mystery easily explained."

"Yes, but I had heard of you before, since the return from the Adirondacks, and I should have known you, if we had met in Kamschatka."

"By my size and color and occupation—I suppose even in Kamschatka I should find a boat and some oars."

"Are you sure, by the way, that you know who I am?"

"Oh, yes! Helen told me before you spoke, and I rather think I should have recognized you by your style of greeting."

"Characteristic, was it?—courtly and graceful and gallant?"

"Very characteristic," replied Miss Forbes. "I hope I haven't

kept her out too long, and tired her too much," she said, as they set Helen's chair down before her mother.

"Indeed you haven't," said Helen. "I could afford to feel very tired, for the sake of so much pleasure; but I really am hardly tired at all."

"I don't know how we can thank Miss Forbes," said Mrs. Craighead.

"Pray don't thank me for pleasing myself!" cried Miss Forbes. "I am going back to the island now, as fast as I can."

"You are not going without me?" said Mr. Chandler, in pretended distress. "I want to go to the pic-nic. I knew there was something going on here to-day that I ought to be at," he said, as he and Miss Forbes walked down to the lake. "I felt convinced of it as soon as I saw the sun shining, and lost no time in coming. This place always reminds me of the garden of Eden," he added, looking back to take a view of the house and its surroundings.

"I doubt if even that ancient garden was as beautiful," said Miss Forbes, "and I am sure I shouldn't have found Adam and Eve as interesting and loveable as these people."

"I believe it would have been better for the race if Miss Edith Craighead had been in Eve's place," said Mr. Chandler. "Has it ever occurred to you to wonder if she didn't go to heaven for a while, and, having laid aside all earthliness, came back to see her friends?"

"If she seemed so angelic to me, I shouldn't like her as much as I do. I need to see a bit of the human element in people, in order to feel any drawing towards them."

"Being decidedly human yourself?"

"Yes.—Get into the boat, Mr. Chandler, and then I will loosen the rope."

"You are going to help me, surely?"

"Give me your hand; step there—now there! Are you safe? All right, then.—I never saw any man take so kindly to woman's rights," Miss Forbes remarked, as she seated herself, and plied the oars with her usual skill.

"This is a phase of them that I don't feel disposed to quarrel with. Do you wish to vote?"

"Not I! any more than I wish to shoulder a musket, or take a pickaxe and spade, and go to digging. As long as the law doesn't oblige me to do the latter, I'll not complain because it doesn't allow me to vote. There are some individual rights, though, that I should like to see vindicated, and some oppressors that I should like to see summarily punished."

"What and who?"

"The rights of a young friend of yours to a little of herself—to enough of her time to keep mind and soul from shrivelling and dwindling into nothing, or growing deformed, and to find out what she is able to endure and what would prove too much for her endurance, and to recover her spiritual balance, after having been knocked down and trodden upon; also, to a little of her physical strength."

"I see;—and the oppressors?"

"Are the brutally selfish, overbearing father and brother; the weakly-selfish, exacting mother; and the half-dozen little embodiments of selfishness, fashioned after their elders—human leeches, all—busy sapping the life of one poor girl."

Mr. Chandler shook his head sadly. "I know it; but what can be done? I have"—

"You have done your best, I know, and I honor you for it. But she needs a *woman's* help."

"I relied upon Mrs. Craighead," said Mr. Chandler, "when I failed to deliver Carrie from her bondage; but she seems to have been unable to help her much, except by kindness and sympathy."

"She is not the one; she is too reserved and stately; a self-depreciating young girl like Carrie never could go to her with her troubles, and Mrs. Craighead's sense of propriety would keep her from prying into them, and finding out where the remedy was to be applied. Edith will be an invaluable friend to Carrie in time, but as yet she can't be expected to have any interest outside her home."

"How have you discovered so much in less than a week? You seem to have read everybody and everything like an open book." Mr. Chandler studied the face before him with its firm, yet sensitive mouth, and bright, clear gray eyes, while he listened to her reply:

"I have not even seen Carrie; but I have heard her spoken of often, and to-day I heard Zandy give an account of a visit there which was quite enough! I saw it all—as who could fail to! Do you happen to know that her brother Martin, whom without having seen, I detest, has spread himself into their 'company chamber,' keeping his own—while Carrie shares her room with her sisters? What could save her from the insane asylum I don't know, if this state of things should go on."

"It shall *not* go on," Mr. Chandler declared, bringing his hand down heavily on the side of the boat. "I have noticed a change in Carrie—a loss of spirit and courage, and have known that she was not happy; but she has been reserved with me of late, and hasn't seemed disposed to talk of home affairs."

"Naturally enough; she feels, I dare say, poor child, that her sacrifice has been thrown away, and her endeavors to improve things a failure, and she is feeling bitterly about it, you may depend. And never having a moment to herself—what can she know of herself, except that she has failed, and is tired out and cross and miserable? Very likely she thinks herself unworthy anybody's good-will, and that is what makes her seem reserved."

"I can't think that she has failed," said Mr. Chandler. "I never saw a greater improvement in anything than there was, last winter, in the atmosphere of that house; and even up to within a few weeks Carrie seemed cheerful and full of hope."

"I dare say all she needs is a change of scene, and a chance to rest," said Miss Forbes.

"Well, she shall have it, then. I'll take her to Granby tomorrow."

"No, indeed!—the idea of going to Granby for a change! She shall go to Boston with me, if I can make her like and trust me. Then I will see if I cannot tone her up to a healthier condition of mind, and restore her strength of body; and I shall do my utmost to imbue her with a sense of her paramount duty to herself. Some people need to be cured of selfishness, and preached to of their duty to others; but Carrie needs the other kind of treatment."

"Let go of your right oar long enough to shake hands!" cried Mr. Chandler. "How little I imagined that a good Samaritan was coming this way in the shape of"—

"An Amazon and rowist," said Miss Forbes, laughing.

"We won't quarrel with the shape," said Mr. Chandler, thinking to himself that it was a very comely one. "Take her home with you, and by the time she comes back, I will see that things are differently arranged—with some view to her comfort."

"Being without her for a time may help her family to see her value a little more clearly," said Miss Forbes. "Nothing like showing people who have made a slave of somebody, what it is to be deprived of him or her."

"Very true.—Perhaps I may take a notion to come for Carrie, and bring her home. I have been meditating a visit to Boston for some time, and that would be a good excuse."

"Have you ever been in Boston?"

"Yes, I was there some twenty years ago; indeed, I used to be there quite often when I was young."

"I thought so."

"Thought so?" repeated Mr. Chandler, in surprise.

"I have been thinking that I had heard your name and seen your face in the dim past, and now I know all about it; I never yet forgot a name or a face, I believe. Tell me if, when you were young, you didn't visit at Mr. Boyd's, in Cambridge?"

"Yes."

"Well, I knew the Boyds intimately. The grandchildren and I were great friends—used to visit back and forth, and have all sorts of good times together; and Sydney and I—the grandson that lives here now—had a boy and girl love affair.—Oh, yes! I remember very well now seeing you there."

"What was I like? I can't recall myself, so far back as that."

"Why, you seemed, as I remember you, like a good-natured, middle-aged man."

"Middle-aged man, indeed! I was but thirty, and am consequently a young man still—not yet fifty."

"You surprise me! though you can't be said to be decrepit;—but where are we? Well! upon my word! this is disgraceful. Now I shall not speak again until we get to the island. The picnic will be waiting for us, or me rather, and here have I been wasting time in this frivolous manner."

"You have seen Mr. Boyd, I suppose," said Mr. Chandler, presently.

"Why, he's not at home, is he? I have heard him spoken of, and the hope has been expressed that he would be back in time to see me."

"He has been at home for two or three days. I should think he would have called before this, but he must be very busy, having been away so long. Have you seen much of him since he was a boy?"

"No, one memorable summer began and ended our devotions; I have only met him a few times since then; but I always have found my respect increasing, the more I saw of him."

"In my opinion, he is everything that a man should be—earnest, honest, high-toned, full of energy and courage; a perfectly balanced character, I consider him, and no one knows him better than I, and no one, of all those whom he has helped, has such cause to love and honor him as I have."

"I am delighted to hear such a good account of my old friend," Miss Forbes said. "I knew he was admirable, from the way the Craigheds speak of him. To whom are you waving your hat?"

"To a silver-haired goddess, a golden-haired dryad, a couple of fawns, and a cherub or two."

"Oh! close by, aren't we?" In a few minutes more they had landed, and were merrily scolded for having been so long in coming; and it was declared to be the nicest thing that could have happened, Miss Forbes's finding Mr. Chandler, and bringing him back with her."

"I must take you over and show you *my* den; it is one of the curiosities of the country," said Mr. Chandler, as, turning after rather a moody revery in Jacques's tower, he found Miss Forbes standing at the door.

"I shouldn't suppose it could justly be called a den," she answered, "from Zandy's description."

"I don't live in it now, thanks to Sydney Boyd. What Zandy described, is an abode fit for a sane human being."

"I wonder where Jacques's treasure is buried?" said Dick, coming up with the others.

"What treasure?" asked Edith. "Oh! the legacy in the iron box," she added, recalling some of the details of Henry Hollister's story.

"I should think Mr. Hollister would come and get it," said Zandy. "Jacques must be dead by this time, and he meant him to have it."

"Mr. Boyd told me that Dr. Parr still hopes to hear of Jacques, alive or dead," said Mr. Chandler; "I presume the doctor knows where the treasure is buried."

"If Mart Reynolds had known about its being here, it would be missing when called for," said Dick.

"Oh! what a horrible thing to say," cried Zandy. "I think badly enough of Mart, but I don't believe he is so wicked as that."

The lunch was eaten under the trees, and soon after the party took to the boats again.

They found when they reached home, that Mrs. Craighead had sent a special message for Carrie; and it would have required a very deliberate and determined depression to resist the influence of so many happy faces and voices, and so much affectionate attention, as awaited her when she arrived. She looked thin and worn, and when she was silent, her face had a perplexed, beset expression, that confirmed Miss Forbes in her opinion as to the root of the trouble, and the remedy needed; and she made rapid progress towards winning Carrie's confidence. Indeed, Carrie quickly conceived much the same feeling for her that she had for Mr. Chandler: the pleasant sense of dependence that a self-distrustful, sensitive nature is apt to feel with a strong and

self-reliant one—one that is inclined to be morbid and to look on the dark side of things, for one that is full of courage and vitality.

When Mr. Chandler mentioned that Mr. Boyd had been in town for two or three days, Mr. Craighead said it was a pity they had not known it before—it would have been pleasant to have him to tea. Mrs. Craighead said nothing, but she had her thoughts. Her fears for Edith were at rest, she had seemed so happy and satisfied, ever since Mr. Boyd's visit; and all she had had lately to feel solicitous about, was lest Sydney's affection were so deep and abiding for Edith, that even the discovery that she had outgrown her girlish interest in him might fail to cure it. In any case, the less he saw of her the better; though how to effect a change from Sydney's old familiar relations in her family had been sorely puzzling her. But the fact that he had been at home so long without calling, looked as if he were going to solve the question for her, and relieve her of embarrassment; and with a perversity growing out of her jealous love for Edith, she chose to feel incensed at what might have seemed neglect to those knowing nothing of the real reason. All this made her manner of receiving him, when he came, as he did that same evening, as distant and cold as at his other visit.

There was no embarrassment in Sydney's bearing. He may have greeted Edith with a little reserve and formality; but he was fully himself—easy, genial and talkative. He was surprised and delighted at meeting his old friend, Miss Forbes, and they had hearty laughs over their precocious love affair, and the wild pranks of that summer.

In the course of the evening there was music, and as Edith left the piano, Mr. Chandler asked Miss Forbes if she would not play for them.

Miss Forbes laughingly replied that she had not a single accomplishment—a lady-like one, at least. Almost everything that she ought she couldn't do; and everything that she ought not, she could.

"Zandy was astonished yesterday," she said, "really almost made me blush, she was so amazed—to find that I could sew. But the truth is, I was altogether too busy, when I was a girl, to learn to play the piano, or to do anything else that would add to my attractions now."

"You can cook!" said Dick. "I have good reason to know that—you and I, grandmamma—haven't we?—bread like sponge-cake, and everything else to match!"

"Did you have to make your own bread in the woods?" asked Edith.

"Martha was ill for two or three days before we came away," Miss Forbes answered, "and I had a chance to display my skill in the cooking line. The practice I have had in camping out was an excellent thing for my reputation."

Before Mr. Chandler went away, he arranged for Miss Forbes and Carrie and Zandy, and as many more as could and would, to come to Granby on a certain day, and lunch with him, and take a drive over to Pine Valley.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE BURIED TREASURE.

"I MET Sydney this afternoon," said Mr. Craighead one evening, as he laid down his paper and took off his spectacles, "and he asked me for Mr. Hollister's address."

"Henry Hollister's?" inquired Edith.

"Yes; he was intending to call and ask you for it, but said he was very busy, and was glad to have met me, though I could only tell him to direct to William's care, not knowing Henry's present address."

"Sydney must be unusually occupied," said Mrs. Craighead, "not to have been able to call and bid Miss Forbes good-by."

"He was very much surprised, and very sorry to hear that she had gone," said Mr. Craighead; "he supposed she was to be here some time longer."

"One would think he might have been a little more attentive—have called upon her more than once," Mrs. Craighead replied, and she asked, "Why did he wish for Henry Hollister's address, dear?"

"Why, it seems that Jacques Muller has made his appearance. He came to Dr. Parr's house last night, footsore and threadbare and emaciated, having returned home to die, as he told the doctor. Mr. Boyd says he seems perfectly sane, and begs that Henry may be sent for, that he may see him before he dies."

"How strange," said Edith, "that he should have come back after all these years, and that his love for Henry should have lasted through everything."

"Has he been insane all the time he has been away, grandpa?" asked Dick.

"I don't know; I only saw Mr. Boyd a moment. He said Jacques's strength had failed very much since he got home, and no time must be lost in sending for Mr. Hollister."

"I suppose he will have the money now," said Dick.

"What money?" asked Mr. Craighead.

"Why, the money old Mr. Muller left, that Jacques buried, and said Mr. Hollister should have when he died," answered Dick.

"He probably took it with him, and has used it up long ago, or lost it," said Mr. Craighead.

"Dick! come over here; we want you," called Zandy, from the other side of the room.

She and Royal were seated by the sofa on which Helen lay enjoying their lively chat; and Dick, who had been sitting at the table where Edith and his mother were busy with their needles, came at Zandy's summons.

"Dick, I wish you would tell the others what you told me last night; do!" Zandy said softly.

"That is one way to keep a secret!" cried Dick—"promise not to tell, and then try to make a fellow tell it himself!"

"Well, I think it is too good to keep. I know nobody else has been as sharp-sighted as you. I nearly fainted with astonishment when he told me. Come, do tell, there's a dear!"

"No," said Dick, shaking his head, "I don't dare to. Grandma doesn't think anybody ought to have any love-affairs till he's forty or so, and she would think it worse yet to go spying out other people's."

"If you have been spying," said Royal, "you had better confess and apologize."

"Pshaw! apologize! I'll tell you and Helen, and that's all; and if you don't keep my secret better than Zandy has, I'll never tell you another.—From things I saw and things I didn't see, and things I heard and didn't hear, I think Mr. Chandler and Miss Forbes are going to make a match!"

Helen exclaimed, and Royal threw himself back on the foot of the sofa, as if the news had overpowered him, and Zandy laughed at their astonishment, real and pretended.

"Well, Dick," said Helen, "that is a discovery for a boy to make! Pray how did you learn so much?"

"With my eyes and ears," answered Dick. "If I see and hear more than other people, I can't help it, can I? I am sure I wasn't *anxious* to see my Miss Forbes look as she did at Mr. Chandler, when he said good-by"—

"All 'kind o' smiley round the lips and teary round the lashes,' like Huldy?" suggested Zandy.

"Not a bit 'teary round the lashes'!" cried Dick. "Her eyes looked as bright as if she never had and never could shed a tear; but sort o', kind o'—well, *deep*, you know; and then they shook hands ever so long, and I heard Mr. Chandler say something about seeing her in Boston before long."

"Oh, Dick!" exclaimed Helen, the color coming into her pale cheeks, "you ought not to have seen it or heard it! how could you?"

"How *couldn't* I!" answered Dick. "I considered that Miss Forbes belonged to *me*, you see, and wasn't I bound to watch her when she was talking to another man!"

"What stuff!" cried Royal. "They will make a splendid pair, though."

"Won't they!" exclaimed Zandy, warmly. "I hope it is true, for I think they must have been made for each other, and it will be so nice to have her so near us."

"I think he must have fallen in love with her—if he did at all—the night of the company," said Dick, "when she looked so fine"—

"Like Juno, or Minerva, or Zenobia, or some other grand somebody," said Zandy.

"Mr. Chandler will have to build a bigger house before he gets married," said Royal. "Think of Juno or Minerva cooped up in his little cottage, and in *Granby*, too!"

"I don't see how you could think she wasn't gentle, Roy, dear," said Helen. "She isn't like grandmamma, or mamma, or Aunt Edith; but she has a gentleness of her own, that matches everything else about her."

"Yes, I think so," assented Royal. "There's '*no discount*' on Miss Forbes, or Mr. Chandler either. They shall have my consent and blessing on their nuptials, when they ask for it."

Three or four days had passed in which nothing more was heard in regard to Jacques, when one morning, as Zandy was going by Dr. Parr's house, on her way home, the door opened, and two gentlemen came out. One was Mr. Boyd, and the other, notwithstanding the great change in his appearance since their meetings in the tower, Zandy instantly recognized as her patient, Mr. Hollister. After the hasty second glance that assured her she was not mistaken, and exclaiming, "Oh dear, what shall I do!" she hurried on as fast as she could for trembling, never looking back until she reached the corner, although she knew that Mr. Boyd had called after her. At the corner she gave one look, and saw that Mr. Boyd had disappeared, and that Mr. Hollister was slowly following her. Involuntarily she quickened her pace, though still trembling and breathless, saying to herself, "I can't see him—I can't—I can't."

By the time she had reached the house, Henry was at the gate; and Edith, who met Zandy in the hall, had hardly asked what was the matter, that she looked so flurried, before she espied him, coming up the garden-walk. Leaving Zandy to hide herself and her excitement in her own room, Edith hastened to meet Henry.

If she had seemed like the perfect impersonation of grace

and beauty to Henry on the island, in her homely tappa-cloth garments, and on the ship in the plain, ill-fitting dress provided for her by the captain's wife, what must she have seemed to him now, in the simple elegance of her morning toilet, with such befitting surroundings, the loveliness of her face heightened by happiness.

If he had carried out the impulse that seized him, he would have dropped on his knees before her, after the fashion of the most devoted knight of chivalry, and kissed the hem of her dress, feeling that even that small favor was far beyond his deserts.

But when Edith put both her hands in his, and looked into his face through tears, and lips tremulous, while they smiled and expressed the gladness she felt at seeing him, it was not strange that his heart swelled with pride and hope, and that for a moment he could not speak.

"When did you come?" Edith asked, when they were seated in the library.

"I arrived in Oxley last night," Henry replied. "You knew of my being sent for to see Jacques, didn't you?"

"Yes; I heard that poor Jacques had come home, and that Dr. Parr wished for your address; and since then I have heard nothing, but have been impatiently waiting, not knowing whether to hope you could gratify Jacques's desire to see you or not. I knew you would if you could."

"It was difficult for me to get away, but Dr. Parr's letter was so urgent that I could not well refuse."

"Jacques has been a burden on the doctor's heart and conscience all these years," said Edith, "and I am very glad he is to have the comfort of caring for him at the last. How is he—Jacques, is he failing fast?"

"He is dead," Henry replied.

"Dead!" exclaimed Edith. "Then you didn't see him after all?"

"Yes, I did," returned Henry; "Dr. Parr met me at the station, and took me to his house. Jacques seemed hardly more than alive, but revived when he saw me."

"He recognized you, then," said Edith; "I am so glad!"

"He has been perfectly sane since he came home, the doctor tells me. Indeed, he gave him a connected and lucid account of himself for a year past; but much of the time between that and his first losing his mind has remained a blank. He had talked of me to the doctor and to Mr. Boyd as if it were but a little while since we used to have our walks and talks, and as if he expected to find me a boy still."

"Poor fellow! was he easily convinced that you were really his old friend?"

"Yes; he quietly accepted the fact that he had lost some of the years; I think it was even a comfort to him to find that I was old enough to take care of myself and his bequest.—Poor Jacques, what would I not give if he had had the good of his possessions! He must have suffered terribly from poverty and sickness;—he had wandered so far from home, too. I suppose he worked his way step by step, with constant delays from illness."

"Why didn't he send to the doctor?—anybody in Oxley would so gladly have helped him," said Edith.

"I suppose his memories of the old life and home and friends came to him gradually," Henry replied; "the doctor thinks so."

"His insanity must have been of a gentle and harmless kind," said Edith, "or he would not have been left free to roam about."

"I should think so," Henry replied.

"Well, he is at rest at last," said Edith, "and no more clouds can darken his mind; all its rare powers are restored, and the few years he lost here are nothing, with an eternity before him, in which to learn and to be happy."

Presently Henry said, his voice trembling and husky, "I really believe there never was a more beautiful instance of self-devotion, and of faithfulness to a friendship. He expressed the greatest satisfaction that the iron box was safe—that he had forgotten its existence, as he might have been tempted to come for it, and use the money; and he should die happy now, he said, knowing that I should have it all."

There was a little silence before Henry went on: "Last night, very soon after Jacques had fully recognized me, and had expressed his joy at seeing me, and knowing that I remembered and loved him still, he called the doctor to his bedside, and insisted that we should go to the island and get the box. I dreaded it—I couldn't bear to leave Jacques; but he insisted, and the doctor said his wish must not be denied. He had told the doctor, before, where the box was buried. As I bent over him before we left the room—Mr. Boyd was to stay with him—his face looked so sunken and deathly that I felt afraid he would be gone before we got back. He seemed to read my thought, and smiled, and said, 'I shall see you again—never fear.' It was a strange experience—that midnight expedition to the island with lanterns and spades. The doctor tried to put a brave face on the matter, but I think even he felt a little shrinking

and awe, as the splash of the oars broke the deep stillness, the lantern casting long flickering gleams across the water. When we reached the island, we made our way through the sighing pines. The doctor took my arm then, and I am sure he trembled, and walked not quite steadily. The old tower loomed up in the darkness like a ruined tomb—it could not have seemed more haunted and dreary to me if it had been full of dead men's bones."

Edith knew how hard it must be for Henry to tell her all this—that he was obliging himself to give the detailed account that was most painful; and knew how terrible the experience itself must have been. But she knew that, after all, it would be a relief for him to feel that he had told it; and though she could say nothing in the frequent pauses when Henry seemed oppressed with gloomy memories, or when he needed a new supply of self-control, her face showed plainly the sympathy she felt. Henry knew her too well to need any words.

"We found the place Jacques had designated—a little to the west of the tower, under one of the largest pines; and while I held the lantern and the doctor plied the pickaxe and spade, the wind moaned and sighed through the wide branches, the saddest requiem over poor Jacques's blighted life and coming death. It seemed an age before the spade touched something with a ringing sound, that showed the box was found; and soon the doctor, kindly insisting upon doing it all himself, drew it out of its hiding-place, and held it up to the light of the lantern. If poor Jacques had known how I hated the sight of it—I am glad he did not. I took a farewell look at his desolate home—my own more desolate refuge—and we left the island, and in course of time were with Jacques again. I never shall forget his look as he saw the box, and felt eagerly for the string tied about his neck, with the key of the box attached. The doctor says he had probably worn it there constantly, and it may have proved the link, holding his mind to memories that he might have totally lost, but for that. He put the key in my hand, and with the death-dews gathering on his forehead, motioned for me to open it. I would not refuse—I tried, but could not, and so he motioned to Mr. Boyd, who stood nearest, to do it. 'Look—count it!' Jacques said in a whisper, and Mr. Boyd counted gold and banknotes to the amount of several hundred dollars, and then took up a folded paper.—'Read!' said Jacques; and Mr. Boyd read the last will and testament of an uncle of Jacques's, which made Jacques the heir to ten thousand dollars of bank stock in New York. It seems incredible, but he must—so the doctor says—have meant it for

me, and put it by for me at the time he received it from his uncle. With the secretiveness of insanity he hid it, never letting even the doctor know of the possession of such a will."

"It was wonderful," said Edith.

"Jacques listened to the reading of the will," Henry resumed, "with his preternaturally bright eyes fixed on Mr. Boyd; and then turned them to me, and said, 'I leave it all to you—all; write it on the paper.' Dr. Parr got a pen and ink, and wrote what Jacques desired, reading it when it was written; then he raised Jacques, and supported him while he feebly traced his name, and Dr. Parr and Mr. Boyd signed their names as witnesses. Jacques lay back almost too much exhausted to breathe, but with a look of perfect content on his face.—A little while after he died."

There was a long silence, in which Henry struggled for composure, and Edith wept quietly in pity for Jacques and sympathy for Henry.

"I have told you all," Henry said at length, "and now will you tell me—you who are so good and wise and clear-sighted—what do you think of my taking this gift, hallowed and made sacred as it is by faithful friendship and self-devotion, to pay my debt of dishonor and shame? My perceptions are befogged and confused by my selfish wishes, and I ask you—I would not do what could seem unworthy to you now, if I could help it. Be my patient guide still, and tell me what to do."

"By all means, dear Henry, free yourself from your sad burden," said Edith, laying her hand gently on his hand. "Jacques would have said the same; you could not please him more than by using his gift for such a purpose. I only wish he could have known what a heaven-sent blessing it was to prove."

"Heaven-sent!" repeated Henry, "do you count it such?—do you really think heaven has blessings for me?"

"Why should it not have?" asked Edith, earnestly; and then smiling, she added, "You are seeing things to-day through the gloom of last night's strange experiences; and believe me, you are doing heaven and yourself great injustice."

"But in *your* eyes, Edith, will the—the dishonor be wiped out as effectually as if I earned the money?"

"We settled that long ago," she answered brightly—"that the money was not to be paid as a penance, you know. In my eyes, your first repentance cancelled the—I cannot speak of 'dishonor' in connection with you, and I will not!" she exclaimed, interrupting herself suddenly, her cheek flushing with the earnestness of her protest. "I *never* have associated anything but truth and honor with the name of my fellow-exile, my

dear friend and brother, and I am not likely to now, when I love and respect him more than ever."

There was something in Edith's frank expression of affection and confidence that grated on Henry's ear; and yet, as he gave it a hasty second thought, it was only consistent with the brotherly and sisterly relations they had always maintained towards each other; he recalled how anxiously he had always encouraged the safe illusion, and answered, "It is very good of you to tell me so."

"You ought not to have needed to be told," Edith said, with loving reproach in her voice and eyes.

Henry had firmly resolved not to make his confession yet—not until that miserable debt was paid, and he was free. But the words would come:

"Edith, I love you more than as a friend and brother—a thousand times more. I cannot hide the truth any longer."

Edith grew deadly pale, and though her lips parted she was speechless, and Henry, seek as he might, could find no gladness in the eyes that were raised to his.

"I tried not to love you so," he said, with a shuddering dread of what was to be the end. "I felt my unworthiness, and knew I had no right even to your friendship—but how could I help it? I could not, and the love that began with my first experience of your loveliness, has been deepening and strengthening, even with every thought of you since we have been separated. Edith—am I causing you only pain? Is there no hope for me? Can you *never* give me more than a sister's love?"

It seemed to Edith that her lips could never utter the answer they must give; but when she looked up, after vainly essaying to speak, and saw the agony of suspense Henry was enduring, she forced herself to say:

"We are friends—we can be nothing more, Henry."

"Do you mean it? I see you do.—It is my punishment, and greater than I can bear."

"No, no! It is *not* your punishment, Henry—Oh, it is too terrible! Why was I left to bring such suffering to you—you, whose happiness is so dear to me!"

"Edith could scarcely refrain from breaking into wild weeping, the pain at her heart was so sharp. Her face showed what she felt.

Henry knelt beside her: "Edith," he said, "I ought not to have told you. I cannot forgive myself for having made you suffer so. It was the hope that impelled me—the hope that my love had awakened some response."

"I might have spared you," Edith said in a broken voice,

"if I had dreamed such a thing were possible. I thought that you—that *no one*, could ever think of me except—as a friend, as an *older sister*"—and one hand involuntarily touched her hair, with a significance that told the whole.

If Henry had been less miserable, he would have smiled at Edith's idea that her white hair could make her less lovely in his, or any one's eyes. As it was, he could only look tenderly at the bowed head, and press his quivering lips upon it.

"You could not have spared me, Edith," he said, "unless you had made yourself seem altogether different from what you are. I am glad we met, yes, *thankful*, even now;—I cannot say more than that. You have not a look or a word to blame yourself for."

"I might—I ought to have told you—I must now"—Edith said, after a moment's silence, speaking hesitatingly and brokenly. "I hope it will not make it harder for you to bear—it may make it easier—God grant that it may!"

"What is it? tell me!" said Henry, as Edith paused.

"I loved and trusted you perfectly—as a friend;—I could not do more, because—because I loved some one else."

She turned her face away, but the bright color spread over cheek and forehead and throat; her eyes were cast down, so that she did not see the expression of keen anguish her words called into Henry's face.

He had not spoken a word, and Edith had not looked up, when Corrie's voice was heard in the hall:

"Aunt Edith! Aunt Edith! where are you?"

Edith started up, and went to the door: "Here I am, Corrie. What is it?"

"Grandmamma says," cried Corrie, running towards her from the other end of the hall, "that she is coming to see Mr. Hollister, and you must keep him to dinner with us."

Edith looked to see if Henry had heard the message, and he shook his head:

"I am to take the train at one o'clock," he said, "and it is time for me to go now," he added, taking out his watch.

"Here comes Zandy," said Corrie; "she wants to see Mr. Hollister."

Edith would gladly have spared Henry the effort she knew he must make in meeting any one now, but it was impossible.

Zandy came in with a pretty mixture of graceful self-possession and girlish shyness, saying, as she gave her hand to Henry:

"I am very glad to see you, though I did run away this morning. That was because I was so perfectly surprised."

"I don't think it was in the least strange that you ran

away," Henry replied. "I am only amazed that you recognized me."

"Oh, I knew you the moment I saw you; and I wanted to speak to you then; but surprise just walked away with me. It was too absurd—my running on a little before you all the way, wasn't it?"

Zandy assumed an ease and freedom she was far from feeling. She was afraid of saying too much, and afraid of saying too little; anxious to assure Henry of her unabated good-will, and uncertain how to do it, without seeming to remember more than he could care to have her. Her embarrassment was not lessened when he said, "I am very glad to see you again," and let his eyes rest on the bright braids, quite as thick, and almost as long as when he saw them in the tower.

"You are not going!" she exclaimed quickly, when Henry took his hat from the table.

"I must; I shall have little enough time to get the train."

"But grandmamma thinks you will stay to dinner. If you are really going, I must call her—mustn't I, Aunt Edith?"

"Yes, do, dear."

Zandy left the room, and as Corrie had been attracted by something out of doors, Edith and Henry were alone a few minutes. Their eyes met as Zandy disappeared, but neither could speak at first. At length Henry drew near to Edith, as she stood by the window:

"I shall try not to prove myself weak and cowardly," he said.

"I have no doubt of your being brave and strong," Edith replied earnestly. "I only wish I might bear the pain, and leave you free and happy."

"I would not have it so; you deserve to be happy—and you will be."

Footsteps and voices were heard approaching, and Henry nerved himself for the difficult ordeal. It was very hard to listen composedly to Mrs. Craighead's many expressions of pleasure at meeting him, of whom she had "heard so much from Edith," and of disappointment that he had so little time to spare for them, and of hope that they should see him in New York by-and-by, as they should be there for a few days before the departure for Europe. She hoped then to meet his mother and sister, too, and renew the old acquaintance. It required all his self-control to keep his voice steady and his face calm to the end; and he was thankful when the painful strain was over, and he could lay aside the mask of cheerfulness.

It is a question which was the more wretched, Henry as he journeyed back to New York, with his dead hopes and deso-

lated life, or Edith, with her heart full to breaking of pity, self-accusings, passionate longings to undo the ruin of happiness she had wrought for a beloved friend, and perhaps, added to the rest, pain for the hopelessness of her own love.

But the day was a busy one, with but little time for solitary grievings, as the next morning Mrs. William Craighead with Helen and Royal were to start for New York. Mr. and Mrs. Craighead and Edith were to follow, with Zandy and Dick, soon enough for all to be together there during the last week before the sailing.

CHAPTER XXVI.

REUNIONS AND SEPARATIONS.

WHAT a houseful it was at Mr. William Craighead's that last week. How busy and energetic and cheerful everybody seemed, in the doing of last things and the making of last arrangements, as if the departure so near at hand were the thing of all others to be desired; when the truth was, that except Grace and Dick, nobody felt joyful about it, and some hearts were very sad and apprehensive.

How soon the day came—a bright warm day, though late in October—and the imperative hour for the assembling of the steamer's passengers.

"One wonders that order can ever come out of such confusion," Edith said to her father, as they stood on the deck watching the bewildering scene—people pressing hither and thither, hurrying up stairs and hurrying down—seekings and findings, shaking of hands, busy tongues—eager, animated or sorrowful faces—the shipping of luggage, and the endless procession of mail-bags. "How fortunate it is that we don't get hopelessly bewildered on such occasions, and forget who we are and what we have to do!"

"I wish I could forget," said Zandy, who was clinging to her grandmother, regardless of the people who had come to see them off, and were talking with her aunt and cousins.

"Why, Zandy?" asked Edith, looking lovingly at her troubled face.

"I should like to take myself for somebody else, and walk ashore, when it was too late for me to be sent back.—Oh, Mr. Lowe!" she exclaimed suddenly in a different tone, her face brightening with pleasure.

She had not forgotten, in the midst of the week's excitements, to find her friend Mrs. Lowe; and now her son appeared with an exquisite basket of flowers, which they hoped might prove a pleasant reminder of them for a few days: "But not at all an emblem of the faithfulness of your memory, in not keeping fresh and bright until you return," he added. "My mother charged me not to come back without your address," he said. "She intends to remind you of us by an occasional letter, you

see, and she hopes you will not be so busy sight-seeing as not to find time to answer it."

"Indeed I shall not!" answered Zandy. "You know we are not going to travel at all this winter. We shall stay quietly in one place, unless we find a change necessary for my cousin."

"I suppose you can hardly have an idea as to the time of your return—it will depend upon your cousin's health."

"Yes; if she improves, as we hope she may this winter, we shall travel next summer, and return in the autumn. That is Uncle William's plan now."

"There is a possibility, then, of your being absent another winter?"

"Oh, I *hope* not! I shall be too home-sick to live, by that time."

"But you will have so many of your friends with you—you ought to be able to endure a long absence from the rest," said Mr. Lowe, smiling at Zandy's earnestness.

She shook her head, and there were tears in her eyes as she glanced at her grandmother.

"I see you need them all," Mr. Lowe said; "but I am selfish enough to wish that you may stay another winter—not because of your cousin's health, but because you find Italy so charming; for you see, I have a faint hope that I may be there myself a year from now, and it would be so pleasant to meet you."

"It would be very nice to meet you, if we were there—but *one* year seems a very long time," answered Zandy with a sigh.

"I must say good-by—you have so many friends who are waiting to talk to you. You must forgive me if I keep on hoping that I may find you in Rome when I get there."

"Who was that?" asked Grace, when Mr. Lowe was gone.

"It was Mr. Lowe," answered Zandy.

"Mr. Lowe! I never heard of him, or saw him before; why didn't you introduce him?"

"I did, to grandma."

"He's very nice-looking, isn't he? I wish he were going with us.—Oh dear! oh dear!"

"What is the matter?" asked Zandy, as Grace drew back behind the others.

"What could have brought *him* here?" exclaimed Grace. Zandy looked to find whom Grace meant by "him," and, to her astonishment, saw Mart Reynolds shaking hands all around with smiling animation.

"How do you do, Zandy?" he said, when it came her

turn—"surprised to see me, aren't you? I came to New York last night on some business for father, and thought I'd run down and see you off. You've got a fine day for sailing. Do you expect to be sea-sick?"

"I don't know—I haven't thought much about it," Zandy answered carelessly, seeing only the disagreeable boy, associated with so many disagreeable things in school and out of school, notwithstanding the graces he had been assiduously cultivating of late.

"Perhaps you will be lucky enough to escape," said Martin, turning to Grace, who became visible at that moment. "Did you have a pleasant time at Philadelphia?" he asked, when they had shaken hands, and fallen back a little.

"O yes, lovely! I enjoyed every minute."

"And you are delighted to go to Europe, too, I suppose?"

"Yes, I am! You know I can't bear America, and maybe I never shall come back; if I can get a duke, or even a count, to marry me, I shan't."

"You may find that counts and dukes don't grow on every bush," answered Martin, looking decidedly cross; "at any rate, they are not within reach of every American girl that wants one."

"You are very rude and unkind," said Grace, pouting in her pretty, childish way, "I suppose you think I never can get married at all, and shall have to be an old maid."

"No, I don't," said Martin, mollified; "such a pretty face as yours won't go begging for a husband; but you see you made me feel bad, talking so coolly about never coming back. I couldn't be rude to *you*, and when I'm not going to see you for such an age. You'll write to me, won't you?"

"I don't know," replied Grace, looking hastily around, "I should like to, but I am afraid Aunt Louisa wouldn't approve of my corresponding with a gentleman."

Grace inwardly smiled at the idea of calling *Mart Reynolds* a gentleman, and with her mind's eye she saw him as he was hardly two years before—a homely, awkward, sly boy, that nobody liked. But the last year had really worked wonders, and now, at twenty, Mart might have passed for considerably older than that. A careless observer might have thought him handsome; his features were regular, and in spite of a degree of bad taste in his careful toilet, there was a certain air of gentility in his appearance.

"Have you got to be tied to your aunt's apron-strings?" asked Martin—"if you have, I pity you. You stand a fine chance to have a jolly time, if you can't even write to a friend

—Carrie's brother! a good idea—get up a correspondence with Carrie, and send letters to me in hers!"

"She doesn't like me, and I can't write to her," answered Grace.

"Well, you must promise to answer my letters; I'm bound to write, and I'm not going to have the writing all on one side. Promise—Grace!"

"Oh, I will,—but don't talk so loud," said Grace, looking anxiously to see if any one had heard.

"Who can *that* be?" she said, suddenly.

Mart looked and answered: "I don't know who they are. Your aunt and cousin seem to know them well enough."

"Oh, I know who *they* are—Miss Hollister, a disagreeable teacher at Miss Haslitt's, and her brother; but the other gentleman, the one speaking to Mrs. and Miss Craighead."

"Oh, that fellow?—isn't it the other brother?—the one that came home with Miss Craighead?—seems to me I've seen him before."

Martin answered carelessly; but an uncomfortable recollection had come over him as he recognized Henry, and for a moment he wished himself anywhere else. But his second thought was, that here was a fine chance to show the coolness and self-possession he was beginning to pride himself upon, and to consider the desideratum for a man of the world, such as he proposed to be. So he stood his ground, looked nonchalant, and was rather disappointed that some one did not introduce him to Henry.

Henry's manner was composed as he stood for a little time talking to Edith and Mrs. Craighead; there was nothing more than a very pale face to tell even Edith, that he was suffering, that his hopes were crushed, and his life a dreary blank. He had not been able to hide his misery from Bessie's watchful eyes when he returned home from Oxley, and Edith readily understood the hauteur with which she received her greeting, and the coldness of her glances.

Bessie had tried to be just in her judgment of Edith, and had brought herself to acknowledge that she was blameless, and might be all that Henry thought her. But the sight of her face, fair and sweet and true as it was, and gentle and gracious as her presence was, brought back all the bitter indignation she had felt, when first she heard her brother's sad story of his disappointment, and she could only see the woman who had wrecked his happiness.

Bessie was fairly haggard herself; but the hollow eyes and colorless cheeks were but a faint token of what those weeks had

been to her. She might have insisted that the terrible heart-aches which she had endured day and night were for Henry, and that his hopeless future was all that made the sunshine a mocking glare, every cheerful sound hateful to her ears, and her duties in school an intolerable burden. It certainly was for his sake that she forced herself, when at home, to be blithe and cheery and to talk, when she could have thrown her arms about Henry's neck, and wept and groaned in an agony of sympathy and fellow-suffering.

It was Zandy's first meeting with Stephen since their adventure on Saranac Lake; but she could give no thought to anything so trivial, with but a few minutes in which to see the faces and hear the voices dearer to her now than ever.

"Bessie," said Stephen, coming to her as she chatted for a moment with Mrs. William Craighead, "you and Henry must see my quarters, and you had better come now."

They went below; Bessie begging of Stephen, as she descended the steep stairs, to be always careful.

"How can anybody that has a dizzy head help pitching forward and breaking it?" she exclaimed.

"I hope you don't imagine that *I* shall be in any danger," answered Stephen.

"Oh, is *this* the size of a state-room?" cried Bessie, as Stephen ushered her in—"a mere pantry—a cubby-hole! Well, I never dreamed that this was all the space allowed to a human being for a voyage of ten days or more; civilization hasn't advanced as far as I supposed. I shall wait to go to Europe when they have proper accommodations for creatures with lungs, or until I can live without breathing."

"I wish you were going with me," Stephen said, heartily.

Bessie put her hand through her brother's arm and leaned her head against him, not trusting herself to speak. She felt that there never had been a time when she could so poorly spare him as now—he was such a help to her, in his unsuspecting, even cheerfulness, and the dash of humorous irony with which he regarded people and things; and she dreaded the thought of home without him.

"I will write every week, Bess," Stephen said, as they went slowly from the state-room. "And tell mother that I sent her the promise by you, that I evaded giving when she asked for it—wait; I will write her a little note."

While Stephen wrote the few lines to his mother, Bessie and Henry stood by watching the people hurrying through the saloon; and as they stood, Bessie was startled by hearing her name spoken by a familiar voice; and Mr. Schuyler grasped her

hand eagerly. Bessie met his look for an instant, and then her eyes fell, while the color flushed up to her forehead, and she trembled in spite of herself.

"Why are you here?" asked Mr. Schuyler; "are you going away—to Europe?"

Bessie shook her head, smiling at the wildness of the suggestion. "I came to see my brother off," she said, finding that she could command her voice.

"And I came to see a friend off," said Mr. Schuyler, looking immensely relieved.

Bessie was taken at unawares by the simple statement, and raising her eyes, exclaimed, "You are not going, then!—I supposed you were," she added, feeling vexed and ashamed, as she saw the expression in Mr. Schuyler's face.

"No, indeed!" he said; "no country has such attractions for me as my own—at present."

"You are an exception, then, to judge from the avidity with which people snatch at the first opportunity of leaving it," answered Bessie, wondering whether she had really "made a goose" of herself.

"You are not looking well, Miss Hollister," said Mr. Schuyler, finding that when the flush faded her face was pale and thin.

"Oh, I am very well. The sea-shore tan has worn off, that is all. People can't expect to look as blooming when they have their heads and hands full of business, as when they are luxuriating in idleness at the seashore. Have you finished your note, Stephen?" she asked.

Stephen and Henry were talking at a little distance, and Mr. Schuyler saw them now for the first time. They shook hands, and then went on deck. Mr. Schuyler felt that he ought not to claim another moment of Bessie's time, but feared lest she might escape him in the crowd on leaving the steamer; and the thought of parting, without a hope of meeting again, was too painful to contemplate. The little ray of hope that Bessie's agitation at their sudden meeting had awakened, gave him courage to detain her, as she was turning away with her brother.

"I must find my friend, and you must have your brother to yourself; but tell me, first," and he looked wistfully into her determined face—"tell me if you will not relent so far as to let me come and see you—I cannot say as a friend, and no more—but will you not let me come once, and then you shall decide whether I may ever come again."

Bessie hesitated, the color came and went, and then the

determination slowly faded from her face, and with a reluctant but bright smile she said, "I think you may come."

She turned away so quickly that Mr. Schuyler had no chance for another word; but he was happy—satisfied to wait, and sought his friend, wondering if it were the same world as the one that had seemed so cheerless when he came on board the steamer.

What a thrill the first signal for going ashore sent through the crowd! what a sudden, breathless hush! what a renewed though subdued bustle, as the good-bys began; how dear friends clung to each other as if they never could part, and then hurried away, not daring to trust another look; what a shaking of hands and expressing of good wishes, a mixture of cheerful adieus with the sadder farewells. And what an eager pressure there was for places from which friends could be seen till the last; and when the fateful plank was removed, what searchings there were among loving eyes, and how they followed each other, long after the love in them was lost to view in the slow, silent, but surely lengthening distance between them. How like a resistless fate the great ship must have seemed to some hearts, as she moved calmly on, unmindful of pain and tears.

CHAPTER XXVII.

AT SEA.

WHEN the pier itself was hidden from view, so that Zandy had no occasion to wave her handkerchief, and no further use for her eyes, she fell to sobbing heartily, and sobbed on, forgetful of everything but her grief, until Royal came to her as she leaned disconsolately against the railing.

"Come, cheer up, Zandy!" he cried, "you haven't left every friend you have in the world behind you, though anybody might think so to see you."

"I feel as if I had," sobbed Zandy.

"That is complimentary, but I'll forgive you if you get over it pretty soon. I feel bad myself, but just see how I bear up!"

"And I, too," said Dick, joining them as Royal spoke. "You've cried enough, Zandy."

"I think it is a pity if I can't cry in peace for five minutes, without being bothered so by you boys."

"Five minutes!" exclaimed Royal; "it's nearer half an hour; and mamma sent for you to come and see where your things are to be put in your state-room, so that you will know where to find them when you have the *head-ache*."

"Where is Helen?" asked Zandy, drying her eyes and looking about, surprised to see what a calm appearance the deck had assumed.

"There she is, over there by the wheel-house, with Grace and Mr. Hollister. Come over and see her."

"Not now," said Zandy, remembering how red her eyes must be. "I'll go down to Aunt Louisa first."

She found her aunt and Pauline busy getting everything arranged for comfort and convenience in each state-room, and she stood by, watching operations listlessly, wondering how she could ever have thought it would be pleasant to go to Europe.

"I took the lower berth, Zandy, dear," said Grace, coming down for something in a great hurry. "I thought you would like the upper one best."

"Very well," Zandy answered, not caring in the least which she had.

Grace found what she wanted, and ran back to the deck; and

after a time all were gathered about Helen, as merry as if partings were things never dreamed of.

Everybody went to dinner, and came back gay and fearless, to enjoy the fresh, bracing air, and the boundless view of sea and sky.

In the course of the afternoon, Zandy and Royal discovered that the nicest place to sit was behind the wheel-house; and perched there, they chatted and laughed in the gayest spirits, and were fully agreed that going to Europe was the jolliest thing in the world. By-and-by Royal began to find that he was having the talk more to himself, and watched Zandy growing pale and quiet, with a comical twinkle in his eyes.

"She is beginning to roll more," he said at length, carelessly.

"Oh dear!"

"Oh dear, *who*, Zandy? Is anything the matter?"

"No," replied Zandy, shortly.

"I'm glad of it," said Royal, beginning to hum, "Rocked in the cradle of the deep."

"Do stop, Roy! how *can* you sing that odious song? I never could bear it."

"You don't dislike it especially now, do you?"

"No more than I always have."

"Then I'll just finish that verse," said Royal; but he was prevented by the appearance of his father.

"How do you get on here?" asked Mr. Craighead.

"Oh, splendidly!" cried Royal, with a mischievous look at Zandy's dismal face. "We think there never was such fun as being 'rocked in the cradle of the deep'!"

"Do you feel tired, Zandy?" asked her uncle.

"No!"

"Aunt Louisa and Grace have gone to lie down, and I didn't know but you might need a little rest too. They looked as bright and rosy as you do."

"Oh dear! *oh* dear! let me get down—quick!" cried Zandy, scrambling to the edge of the little roof, and seizing her uncle's arm to steady herself; and with a vague impression of men and women, waves, ropes, masts, boats and sky all whirling in the air, she broke from her uncle and rushed swiftly, though in a very zigzag course, along the deck, never heeding the merry laughter that greeted her as she shot past the rest of the party, or knowing who it was that ran to her rescue as the deck seemed to be dancing a jig, and to threaten to tip her off into the sea.

It happened that Pauline, having attended to Grace's im-

mediate needs, was with Mrs. Craighead, and there was no one to receive Zandy when Stephen left her at the door of her state-room; and as Grace was lying on the lounge, she threw herself into the lower berth. Grace opened her eyes and moved her head the least bit: "Oh, Zandy! you are on my hat! you'll crush it."

"I don't care if I do," groaned Zandy.

"Why don't you get into your own berth?" asked Grace, half crying.

"What have you done with my flowers?" demanded Zandy. "I left them on that lounge."

"I made Pauline throw them through the port-hole," answered Grace. "I couldn't bear the smell."

Zandy was speechlessly indignant for a minute, and then she forgot her flowers in her misery: "Oh dear! oh dear! I do wish I was at home. Pauline, do come here!" she cried, as Pauline shot past the door into Helen's room, which was opposite.

There was no answer, and presently, Zandy called again: "Pauline, why don't you come here? I want you."

"I can't, Miss. Oh, what shall I do—what shall I do!" and the dismal words died away in a dismal moan.

"Oh, how funny! how perfectly ridiculous!" cried Zandy, and she laughed in spite of her misery.

The next morning, Mrs. Craighead looked in, moving very cautiously, and holding on the door, while she made inquiries as to the condition of each. Helen declared herself quite well, and in a hurry to get on deck again; Zandy and Grace groaned with no less unction than the night before, and said they were not going to get out of their berths.

"We will see about that," her aunt replied; "I haven't the strength to say you must, but I shall send Uncle William to attend to you."

Presently Mr. Craighead came. "Girls," he said, "I'll give you just half an hour to get dressed in! then Dick and Royal will come and help you up on deck."

"How hard-hearted you are, Uncle William!" cried Zandy, "I can't move my head an inch without its seeming as if I were being danced up and down as high as the sky and as deep as the sea. I can't get up."

"Nonsense, you must. I will send the stewardess to help you, and you have only half an hour—remember!"

Nothing was said for some minutes, after Mr. Craighead was gone; then Grace asked Zandy if she was going to get up.

"I suppose so," answered Zandy, crossly enough.

"Well, I'm not," said Grace. "I should like to see anybody make me, when I feel so horridly."

"What are you *there* for then?" demanded Zandy, as, raising her head, she found that Grace had betaken herself to the sofa.

"Because I'm tired of lying in that stuffy place," said Grace. "I wish I had taken the upper berth."

"You may have it now and welcome. I'd as soon undertake to get down from a church steeple. O dear!"

"Come, Mademoiselle, I will help you to dress now," said the stewardess, bustling in.

Zandy made a desperate essay, and descended, hardly sure whether it was her feet or head that touched the floor first. She staggered and reeled, and finally landed, not very gently, upon the sofa, and Grace made a great outcry.

"How am I to dress, if I can't have a place to sit down?" asked Zandy.

"I am sure I don't know," replied Grace, languidly.

"Oh, never mind!" exclaimed the stewardess cheerfully.

"Mademoiselle can stand up very well, if she only thinks so."

Zandy never could tell how she lived through the indescribable woes of the next few minutes.

She was just ready when the boys came to the door, calling to her and Grace to hurry up, or they wouldn't get any breakfast.

"Breakfast!" cried Zandy, in disgust.

As she opened the door, feeling dizzy, cross, and generally wretched, she was seized by Dick on one side and Royal on the other, and hurried through the saloon and up the stairs and along the deck.

"Oh, let me sit down!—Oh! you odious boys!—I won't—I can't—Uncle William! Oh dear!—Aunt Louisa! Stop them, stop them!"

Nobody stopped them, and they did not stop themselves, for all Zandy's frantic remonstrances, till they had 'walked her' up and down the deck at least half-a-dozen times, and were quite out of breath; then they let her sit down beside Helen, and by that time there were roses on her cheeks, and she was laughing as heartily as the lookers-on, though threatening vengeance on Dick and Royal for treating her so shamefully.

Grace persisted that she was too ill to get up that day, but on the next morning she appeared, looking very sweet and helpless, and was petted and waited on by everybody, except Helen who could not, and Zandy who would not, be "her slave," as Zandy expressed it; and she maintained that interesting helplessness during the voyage.

After the first few days it grew so cold that Helen was obliged to stay below, and Zandy and Royal spent a great part of the time with her. When Zandy was on deck, it was very hard for her to set proper bounds to the spirit of fun and frolic that possessed her. She had speedily become a great favorite with all the children on board, and her appearance was the signal for a general rush upon her; and to all, grown people as well as children, her bright face was always welcome. She had her special protégés among them—those who most needed attention and cheering up, and it all seemed to come so naturally in her way, that no one would have noticed or thought of it, except those who received the graceful little deeds and words.

One day that was particularly windy, when the ship rolled very much, and little splashes of waves washed over the deck, Zandy went up to have a race with three or four of her boy-friends. Grace had gone up with Mr. Hollister a little while before, to "get a breath of fresh air," and was sitting, all bundled up, under the shelter of the windward boats. There was hardly anybody else on deck, and Zandy gave herself up to a frolic with the wind and the children. She wore a little turban, and her hair, which she had that morning fastened up in a loose coil, had fallen over her shoulders and was being blown about, much to Grace's horror, which she expressed to Stephen very gently and deprecatingly.

Suddenly there came a swift-climbing breaker, that seemed bent on upsetting the steamer; she lay nearly flat on her side. Grace's chair broke from the rope that fastened it to one of the boats, and shot across the deck; Stephen went careering after Grace—in short, there was general commotion among chairs and people. It happened that Stephen was the first to recover his senses and his footing, and to become conscious, first of Grace in a helpless heap on the floor, looking pale and frightened, and almost at the same instant of screams and cries from the children, who were tossing their arms wildly, and then of Zandy close by an opening in the railing, crouching there, or going overboard—he could not tell which, but found that she had fast hold of the railing with one hand, while the other held as fast to a little foot.

It was but the work of a moment for Stephen to rescue the poor child, hanging, head downward, over the side of the ship, and relieve Zandy, whose slender hand was all that had kept him from death; and by the time it was done, a confused idea that something terrible had happened had spread through the ship. The parents received their boy in their arms, hardly knowing what had befallen him, and everybody pressed anxious-

ly and excitedly for the particulars. It was some time before it was clearly understood how narrow had been the escape from an appalling tragedy; and then Zandy, with her bruised hands and wrists, and a strained shoulder, was the heroine. Words seemed powerless to express the admiration her wonderful presence of mind and daring excited among passengers and crew.

She bore her honors very meekly, partly because of her aches and pains, and partly because she had a secret conviction that she had foolishly incited her playfellows to recklessness, and that she was somewhat to blame for the accident. Grace fully agreed with her in this opinion. As she said to Mr. Hollister, it was a pity for a girl to be so childish, and she doubted if Zandy would *ever* behave like a young lady; she was certainly old enough to begin, if she were ever going to. She was sure that frightful thing would never have happened if she hadn't been romping like a boy.

She had no means of knowing Stephen's opinions, as he kept them to himself.

Nothing else happened during the voyage, amounting to an adventure. There were the usual diversions and occupations—eating, sleeping, walking, talking, reading, flirting and enduring; and there were the usual differences of opinion as to the pleasures of a voyage to Europe, when the steamer reached Havre.

The Craigheads had fully expected to meet Johnston Craighead at Havre; but they looked in vain for the familiar face among all the strange ones. The mystery of his non-appearance was explained when they reached Paris, by a letter which informed them that, while they read it, the writer would in all probability be in Oxley. He had found most unexpectedly, that he could leave his business for a time, and had at once decided to go home and see for himself if his sister Edith were there. His friends in Paris readily reconciled themselves to their own disappointment, in view of the joy his visit would give at home.

Mr. and Mrs. Craighead had supposed it would be necessary to go directly on to Nice; but they found the weather so charming and Helen so much improved by the voyage, that they remained in Paris two weeks, and having had a glimpse of the enjoyments the beautiful city afforded, were all reluctant to leave it, when forced to do so by the coming of clouds and cold. As Zandy expressed it to Helen, every day was like "an Arabian Night;" all that was wanting was the magicians and genii, and there was really nothing for them to do, except to transport the rest of their friends across the water to enjoy all the magical scenes with them.

What most captivated Grace were the visits to the *modistes*. Her great trial was that she was not her own mistress, with her fortune at her own command, and no one to say, "That is too expensive for you now, Grace. You are not 'out' yet, you know." What a stock of pretty costumes and elegant fineries she would have provided for the winter, if she could have had her way; and how she would have liked to attach herself to some old French dowager, and spend the winter in Paris, the gayest of the gay.

Mr. and Mrs. Craighead had at once sought for further particulars regarding Mr. Gellert's death and the state of his affairs; but were able to learn but little that was new to them. Mrs. Craighead took Grace to see the house and the room where he had died, feeling it only right to keep alive, so far as was possible, a tender memory of her father; and was glad to see that she seemed really moved at the thought of his dying in that very room childless, loveless, almost friendless.

Mr. Craighead had been in correspondence with the administrators ever since Mr. Gellert's death, and knew that he died intestate, and that his affairs were involved, seeming to require a great deal of litigation and delay in their settlement. The small fortune already secured to Grace, of which Mr. Craighead had the charge, was left her by her mother. But there being no other known heirs she would rightfully come into possession of the whole of her father's fortune when of age; and it had always been regarded as immense.

Mr. Craighead, with his simple, straight-forward ideas of business, found it very difficult to keep his temper in talking with the two smilingly polite, glib Frenchmen, and the dark-faced lawyers; and after each interview he would declare to his wife that he knew no more than he did before, and that he didn't believe the estate ever would be settled, and he doubted if Grace ever got a penny of it. If the property were in America, and had American administrators, he should have some hope.

Grace appeared in a new character now, as a "shrewd little business woman," as her uncle said. She insisted upon hearing all the details, and really showed a very clear head for them. She was even present with her uncle at one of the interviews, and convinced the administrators that their heiress was no myth, and by no means an indifferent or spiritless personality. But, after all, no one dreamed how intense Grace's interest was in having her rights, to the very last penny. It would have broken her heart to be obliged to regard her prospects as doubtfully as her uncle did.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MY MOUNTAIN.

BEFORE the Craigheads left Paris, a welcome budget of letters came, and this, from Mrs. Craighead, was among them:

OXLEY, Nov. —, 186—.

MY DARLING CHILDREN: I am not yet fully able to realise that so many of my treasures are on the sea, and I should hardly be surprised to see you all moving about me, and making the old home beautiful with your presence, as you did not long ago. When the steamer began to move from the pier on *that day*, if I could have stretched out my arms and gathered you all in, and held you close, I should have done it; but I am of a better mind now, and can think—not *always*, my dears, but often—of the pleasures in store for you, and above all, of the health our sweet Helen is to gain.

Before you receive this letter you will have learned that you passed our dear Johnston on the ocean, when not very far out from land, but you will not begrudge us the happiness of seeing him, which is delayed to you only for a little time. He did not take us entirely by surprise, as we found a "letter of warning" awaiting us when we reached home; and you can imagine better than I can tell you, into what a flutter of happy excitement his "warning" threw us. It is a blessing to have him now, when we are feeling our parting from you all so much; and yet it would have been inexpressibly sweet to have one complete reunion after our precious Edith's return to us. But that will come by-and-by, and I will not let myself wish for anything more than I have, for indeed "my cup runneth over. Goodness and mercy *have* followed me all the days of my life." I feel it even when my heart cries out for its lost treasures.

Johnston has hardly changed at all in the three years since he was at home last—he is his own dear self, and you all know what that means. Corrie's poor little heart is torn with pity because his hair and whiskers are red—like hers! as she says. She tries her best to reassure him by telling him that his eyes are "sweet brown, like aunt Edith's"—as they are, you know, though different in expression.

Johnston tried to give Johnny a riding-lesson on Miss Flyte this morn-

ing, but could really do nothing with her. She was as obstinate as a mule, and seems to have made up her perverse little mind that she will please herself and nobody else while Zandy is away. She has taken Johnny and Corrie for a drive two or three times, and behaved very well, only turning about coolly and trotting home when she thought she had gone far enough. But no amount of coaxing, or whipping—don't be alarmed, Zandy, you know uncle Johnston is always good to animals—had the least effect this morning. She stood like a post, apparently deaf and jointless, until Johnston said "I give it up? go to your stable," and then she kicked up her heels and departed.

Edith and Johnston seem to understand each other perfectly, and now, as I write in the library, are walking up and down the piazza, arm in arm like two lovers, talking fast, and now and then laughing out heartily—so like old times! If Johnston could but stay with us all winter! I will not say that his short visit will be an aggravation, but it will be very hard to let him go so soon as he must.

Carrie Reynolds has come home wonderfully improved in health and spirits, and full of enthusiasm in regard to her visit. Miss Forbes must have done a great deal for her pleasure and entertainment, and with the best possible effect. The worried look has disappeared from her face, and she seems like her happiest self. She found some changes at home that amazed and delighted her. Mr. Chandler had carried out his intention of speaking to her father about the arrangement of the rooms, and had easily obtained permission to furnish one for Carrie's special use, and the poor child is as full of gratitude as if some wonderful sacrifice had been made for her sake. But no doubt she will write to you herself soon, and tell you all about that and her visit. Mr. Chandler went to Boston for her, as he proposed, and Carrie says—I have not seen Mr. Chandler yet—that he had the offer of some scientific professorship in Boston. That is the position of all others for which he is fitted, and much as we should regret losing him from our little circle and from Granby, I cannot help hoping sincerely that he will accept the offer. His talents and acquirements entitle him to something better than the place he occupies now, useful as he is in it. If the surmises of our precocious children are correct, it certainly would be a very fine thing; for, from Carrie's account of Miss Forbes's life at home, and of the society she is accustomed to, it would be a very great change for her to come to Granby. But this is foolish conjecturing as to other people's most private affairs, and Dick and Zandy will please bear in mind that they are not to take courage from my example to "*spy*" any more, as Royal expresses it.

It seems like saying good-by over again to close a letter to you my children; but I must leave you now, as I have an engagement with Betsey in the store-room.

Enjoy all you can, my darlings, and remember that our prayers follow you wherever you go. The Lord *will* watch between us while we are absent from each other. Your devoted

MOTHER AND GRANDMOTHER.

One of the first letters Stephen received from Bessie informed him of her engagement to Mr. Schuyler. She said:

I am afraid you will be as incredulous as I was at first, and am still, sometimes. But it is a beautiful truth that the very day after you sailed I promised to marry Gregory Schuyler; and I hope it will please you as much as it ought, that your self-conceited, self-sufficient, self-willed sister has been treated so much better than she deserved, in that, instead of being taken at her foolish word and left to the dry husks she had chosen, she has been blessed with the love of the best and truest heart in all the world—no offence to you, my dear, or to Henry; you know in what esteem I hold your two hearts. If coming in contact with a perfectly symmetrical soul can smoothen and soften a jagged, crotchety one, there is hope for me; and already there is an encouraging symptom: I feel *amiably towards Aunt Frisby*, as a rule! And it isn't because she has improved, I assure you; but I have actually pitied her several times, instead of feeling indignant at her existence and her presence here. How strange it is that a kindly feeling towards one human being—I don't mean aunt Frisby—should make life seem such a different thing, so much more beautiful and desirable; and how like sunshine it is—brightening dark places, warming cold ones, giving us hope for others as well as ourselves.—You may smile your cynical smile as much as you please—I can bear it, and I only hope that some time you will learn by blissful experience, as I have, how much a true love can do for one, spiritually and heartily. * * * * *

When Stephen informed Mrs. Craighead of his sister's engagement, she barely escaped expressing the extreme astonishment she felt—not that Bessie was engaged, but that she was engaged to Gregory Schuyler, a man who might have married into any family in New-York, who had been always courted and petted in society, and who really was so desirable a *parti*. And it was not that she had not the highest opinion of Bessie; but she had no social position, and, in a worldly view, could not be said to be Mr. Schuyler's equal.

But these thoughts she kept to herself, and begged Stephen to assure his sister of her sincere congratulations.

The winter passed quickly and pleasantly at Nice. Helen, perhaps, did not gain as rapidly as her friends hoped; but

there was real improvement. It was valuable time to Dick and Royal, as they were to enter college in the autumn; and Zandy and Grace, too, studied with Mr. Hollister, and had masters in music and the languages. They made good use of the holidays, in seeing everything of interest in and about Nice; but the business of those six months was study for the well ones, and health for Helen. Early in June they left Nice, and the middle of the month found them in Geneva. Helen was impatient to see Switzerland, and her fancies governed their movements in a great degree.

"The first thing to be done is to get rested, and rid of that miserable cold, my dear," said Mrs. Craighead, as, on the evening of their arrival in Geneva, Helen was wishing to see Chamounix, and to make some of the Swiss passes. "I have no doubt you can do a great deal, some time, but not just yet."

"What was that man in the office saying about Mont Blanc, Dick?" asked Royal.

"That it hadn't been visible for nearly two weeks, and might not be for two weeks to come," replied Dick.

"O dear! what if I shouldn't see it at all," sighed Helen.

"Foolish child! you shall see it," said her mother. "There is nothing to prevent our waiting here till the mountain reveals itself, unless it is unreasonably long about it, and there are plenty of other points from which to get views of it."

"I dare say you will be disappointed when you do see it," said Grace, "you expect so much. I always am, in things I hear so much about. Niagara didn't half fulfil my expectations."

"What an imagination you must have!" remarked Zandy. "It would be worth while to see the falls it pictures."

The next morning Helen woke with the daylight, and her first thought was of The Mountain.

"Pauline!" she cried, "wake up, and see if you can see Mont Blanc."

Pauline rose sleepily from her couch beside Helen, and went to the window. "No, Miss Helen, there's nothing but a great pile of white clouds off there—no mountain at all. You must go to sleep again; your mamma would feel very bad to have you awake at this dreadful time of morning," and Pauline herself was soon fast asleep again.

Helen lay still a few minutes, trying to content herself with Pauline's statement; but the "pile of great white clouds off there" were very alluring words, full of promise; and at length she left her bed and went to the window.

As she pushed open the shutters Pauline had carefully closed, she clasped her hands in an ecstasy.

"Oh, how beautiful! how heavenly!" she exclaimed softly; and she stood gazing in rapt delight, unconscious of cold—of everything but the unspeakable glory of that unveiled head. "Can the great white throne be more glorious!" she thought; and as she looked, the still, solemn, unearthly majesty filled her soul, until she could almost have believed herself within the gates of heaven.

Her mother's voice startled her from her trance of solemn happiness:

"My child!" Mrs. Craighead exclaimed, as, opening the door leading from her own room into Helen's, she beheld her standing at the window in her night-dress—"my dear child, what are you doing? have you lost your senses? how long have you been here? you are shivering—chilled through."

"Am I, mamma? I didn't mean to be careless, but oh! if anything earthly is so beautiful, what must heaven be?"

Mrs. Craighead turned away her eyes in pain from Helen's face, so beautiful in the holy light shining from within, and in her distress and nervous anxiety, was almost harsh, as she hurried her into bed, and calling Pauline, made all haste to get hot blankets and hot drinks, to ward off the effects of her exposure.

"I am sorry to have given you so much trouble, mamma," Helen said by-and-by, when she was warm again, and her mother's fears were allayed; "but do let Pauline wheel my bed in front of the window, so that I can see my mountain; I can lie here all covered up, and look."

"Mont Blanc has hidden his head, my dear," said Mrs. Craighead, turning to the window. "You never would imagine there was anything beyond that grey wall of clouds; so shut up your eyes and go to sleep."

"Did Zandy see it?"

"Yes, I found her sitting at the window before I came to you; but *she* was all wrapped up in blankets, taking things very comfortable and safely."

"Did you call Grace?"

"No; she was asleep, and Zandy said she had wakened her once, and she didn't care to get up; so I left her asleep."

"Mamma," began Helen presently, while her mother was preparing to leave her, "if—may I"—

"Well, dear, what is it?"

"I don't like to say anything to trouble you; but I was thinking that if I should—if anything should happen that I

couldn't go home—would you and papa mind letting me—letting me be buried here, where I first saw Mont Blanc? Oh, mamma, I can't tell you how I love it—how the thought of going away where I never can see it again pains me.—But then," she added brightly, "it doesn't matter so much, after all, because I shall never forget it—never; even in heaven I shall remember it, I know. What a beautiful thing it is to be able to carry so many lovely and grand pictures in our minds, and call them up to look at and enjoy whenever we like; one never crowds out the others; but I would lose all the rest rather than Mont Blanc—and Oxley."

When Helen slept, it was to dream of the two pictures she loved most, and of heaven, that was as real a place to her as Oxley itself.

Late in the afternoon she lay on the sofa in her mother's parlor, with Zandy beside her, where she could see the veil of clouds which concealed that wonderful glory. She was likening it in her thoughts to the days or years that conceal the glories of heaven from mortal eyes, while she talked quietly with Zandy of the scene, as Zandy saw it and felt it.

Presently Grace and Mr. Hollister came in, and the boys followed soon after.

"Oh, you are here!" said Royal, when he saw Grace; "we looked everywhere for you. Where have you been?"

"Only across one bridge and back by another," said Grace. "It is very odd that you didn't see us."

"Oh, yes, very odd—incomprehensible!" said Dick crossly. "I thought we were all going to walk together."

"Was that the understanding?" asked Stephen, looking at Grace inquiringly.

"Why, yes," Grace answered; "but I thought the boys had forgotten all about it, and had gone by themselves."

"If you had chosen to look in here, you would have found them waiting for you, as they agreed," said Zandy coldly.

"Oh, well," said Royal, "you had a good time, I suppose, and so had we—I, I mean; beg your pardon, Dick, for misrepresenting you so."

Royal sat down by Helen, and Dick went to the window, looking anything but good-natured, and stared at the passers-by in the street below.

"Did you see Mont Blanc this morning, Dick?" asked Helen.

"Yes, I saw it," replied Dick. "Mr. Hollister knocked us up before daylight—nothing so dreadfully tremendous about it."

All laughed at Dick's perverse tone, and Mr. Hollister said,

"That doesn't sound much like your views this morning, Dick. You see, Miss Grace, what you are responsible for—turning his enthusiasm into bitterness. But really, was there ever a grander sight? When I first looked out, there was nothing to be seen but a dense bank of gray clouds, and I was just going back to bed in disgust, when the clouds began slowly to part in twain, and in a few moments His Majesty stood revealed in peerless splendor. I wouldn't have missed that revealing for a great deal."

"How radiantly white the mountain was," said Zandy; "I have always imagined that the piles of snowy clouds we so often see in the blue sky looked like snow-covered mountains; but there never was such wonderful whiteness as that. Wasn't it beautiful to see the clouds—the gray veil of clouds—close slowly over the mountain again, Mr. Hollister?"

"Very! I may see something finer in my life than that whole scene, but I think it doubtful."

"It doesn't seem possible, does it?" said Grace to Stephen.

"What doesn't seem possible?" asked Zandy. "I didn't know that you saw Mont Blanc at all," she added carelessly, as Grace made no reply to her abrupt question.

That evening all but Mrs. Craighead and Helen went out for a stroll, and the scene was enchanting beyond description. Brightest moonlight flooded the earth, resting lovingly, as on the breast of kindred and friends, on the lake and river, and the valleys and mountains; and, casting its radiance over the town, it left in the safe mystery of shadow whatever was hopelessly commonplace, and transfigured all the rest. The bright lights on the bridges, and along the quays, dropped their golden rays into the water to vie with its silvery gleam. Every moving figure received the magical touch, and lent a charm; and even the shops added a little to the enchantment, in their glittering displays.

It happened that Grace and Stephen got separated from the rest of the party, and found themselves alone on one of the bridges.

"Hadn't we better wait here?" asked Stephen. "They can't be far behind us."

So they stood leaning on the parapet, looking down upon the waters, and listening to the noise of their onward rush; and for a time neither spoke. Stephen was thinking of the bright, brave-hearted river beneath them, and of its very suggestive story—how it ran its swift, triumphant race through the clear waters of the lake, and how, farther on, it was overtaken and overcome by the dull, sluggish Arve, and lost its brightness forevermore.

He was recalled to a consciousness of Grace, by her moving away from him and standing by herself. He followed her, and when he succeeded in seeing her face, he found tears on her long lashes.

"Why, what is the matter Grace?" he asked, wondering how long he had neglected her.

"Nothing, only—only I am so"—

"So what?—tell me," said Stephen.

"I can't—I don't want to trouble anybody with"—

"Silly child," said Stephen, "don't distrust your friends. I will be your father-confessor, and then it will be my duty to hear your griefs. So now begin: what is the first?"

Grace lifted her tearful eyes to Stephen's face, with a look of childlike inquiry in them, and seeming to gain courage from its expression, she exclaimed:

"Oh, Mr. Hollister, if I were sure you liked me, and were my *real* friend, I should be so glad—I haven't *any* friends hardly, except Dick, and he is only a boy, and I am a woman, though Aunt Louisa does insist on treating me like a child."

Stephen thought he had never seen Grace look so good and lovely, her face so capable of expressing womanly feeling.

"You mustn't doubt my being your friend, Grace," he said. "I am sure you have a great many friends, but if you care to count me as one, you may feel as sure of me as you like."

"I do feel so desolate sometimes," Grace said sadly, "as if I would like to throw myself into a rushing river like this, and never have any more cold looks and words."

"Helen is always kind and gentle to you, isn't she?" Stephen asked, not feeling quite satisfied as to how far Grace's griefs were imaginary, and how far real. He knew that Zandy was often cold and harsh, but never had seen anything of the kind in the others. Still it was decidedly pleasant to find himself confided in to this extent by a pretty, clever girl like Grace.

Grace answered that Helen was kind, but that she didn't understand her—nobody did.

"I think I do," Stephen said, "and we will shake hands on a friendly compact, and the 'arrowy Rhone' shall be our witness."

They shook hands, and Grace looked very happy, and very innocent and childlike.

She was silent a moment, and then laying her hand on Stephen's arm, said, "Will you promise me one thing, Mr. Hollister?"

"Yes, two or three things—almost anything you could ask me."

"Promise that you will not decide against me in *anything*—I mean—you know how Zandy sees what I say and do—makes the worst of things?"

"Yes, and I promise to use my own eyes, and not hers, or anybody else's, in judging of what you say and do."

"But, please, you mustn't *seem* to take my part, because that will only make Zandy dislike me more—I would rather bear anything than make trouble."

"Trouble! Nobody could possibly object to my befriending a gentle little girl like you. You need to take a braver view of life, and stand up for yourself. If you had some of Zandy's independence it would be better for you, but I would rather have you as you are, and help you to fight your little battles. And now I must take you home, for those people are not coming this way, and I must save you a scolding."

Stephen drew Grace's hand within his arm, and they went back to the hotel.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE VEIL OF DAYS.

"THIS is not all you are equal to, my dear, is it?" asked Mr. Craighead one day, on coming in from a visit to his banker, stooping to kiss Helen as he spoke.

"I am afraid it is, papa," Helen answered, and her voice suggested that even to speak was an exertion, and she looked as if to raise her head from the sofa, where she lay, would be quite beyond her strength.

"I am sorry; I hoped you would be able to take the drive to Fernet to-day, it is so pleasant—the air is so clear; but I dare say you will feel better to-morrow, and the weather may be just as fine."

"I wish you would go without me, papa," Helen said. "I can't bear to have you lose so much time on my account. Take the others to-day—please do."

"No, indeed!" exclaimed Zandy and Royal.

"No, indeed!" echoed Mrs. Craighead; "there is plenty of time, my love; a few days are nothing, with the whole summer before us, and not one of us would enjoy seeing the sights without you."

"A few days will set her up, won't they, so that she can sight-see with the best of us?" said Mr. Craighead.

"Of course they will," replied his wife, coming to give Helen her medicine. "The doctor says she only needs to keep quiet for a time, and get rid of this cold. Letters!" she exclaimed, as Mr. Craighead took several from his pocket—"from home too! how good they are to write so often. Now we will have a treat; do you feel able to hear them, darling?"

"O yes," replied Helen, eagerly; "I have been thinking of Oxley all day. It must have been because the letters were so near."

"There is one for Grace," said Mr. Craighead, "and here is one for you, Zandy—from Carrie Reynolds, I think. Now for the home letters."

They contained but little news, but plenty of affection, and plenty of those pleasant details, regarding home affairs and doings, that make the charm of letters to the absent. They

were as satisfactory as anything could be, except the actual presence of the writers themselves, and an actual part in the scenes described.

When Zandy opened Carrie's letter, she exclaimed, "Oh, it is about Mr. Chandler's wedding! Shall I read it to you?"

Everybody wished to hear it; so Zandy read:

OXLEY, June—, 186—

MY DEAR ZANDY:—I fully intended to write to you as soon as I got home from Boston, for I knew you would like to hear of the event we were all so much interested in; but when you know that I found ma ill in bed, and Charlie with a dreadful cut on his foot, you will believe that I have been too busy for writing letters. And then there are other things that I will tell you of by-and-by that have made me busier still. It is after midnight now; but it is my only hope of being able to write at all, and so I am sitting up to do it, though if I am very long about it, I shall fall asleep over my paper.

I went to Boston with Mr. Boyd—Miss Forbes wanted me to come before, but I could't—and we found her as happy as possible. Mr. Chandler was there, of course, that evening, and just like himself—so kind and good, but he has been growing handsome, Zandy. We always thought him fine-looking, you know, but now he is really handsome, and people call him *Professor*, which seems to suit his style so nicely. I didn't feel quite sure that he would seem the same to me, after not having seen me for so long, and having so many new interests; but he made me tell him all about home matters, and made me feel that he was just as much my friend as when he was in Granby. There were other pleasant people there, relatives from out of town, and we had a charming evening. Poor Hammy was the only one who didn't seem happy. He didn't smile once during the evening. Even dear Mrs. Forbes was cheerful, but of course it was very different from what it would have been if Miss Forbes hadn't been going to live so near her home. For their sakes I was glad she wasn't going to Granby.

It did seem so nice to be in that serene old house again; it makes one feel that things are not *all* so changeable and unreliable, everything looks so old-fashioned and substantial, as if it had stood just so for a century; and I am sure dear Mrs. Forbes could not seem so placid and happy if she had found life's paths so hard and trying. How much Miss Forbes must love Mr. Chandler, to be willing to leave such a home; and she does love him enough—it shines in her eyes and smiles on her lips whenever she looks at him.

The next morning we had breakfast as usual, though the wed-

ding was to be at eleven o'clock. I didn't suppose brides ever ate on their wedding-day, but Miss Forbes did, and then what did she do but insist upon helping her mother and me to dress! When we were arrayed to her liking—she gave me the pretty blue silk I wore—she sent me down to comfort Hammy, who was too disconsolate to utter a word. He is very dependent on his sister Leo, but for all he is so like a girl in some things, I respect him very much; he is so devoted to his mother and father, and I don't believe he would do an ungentlemanly thing to save his life. Well, I didn't see Miss Forbes again until the carriages were at the door, and she came into the drawing-room with Mr. Chandler. Oh, Zandy, how I wish you could have seen them, they did look splendid. Miss Forbes wore a pearl-colored silk, rich enough to stand alone, as Miss Bean would say, and a white lace shawl—I *think* it was point, but I'm not sure—and a lovely white hat, and she carried an exquisite bouquet. She looked *beautiful*, Zandy, really beautiful, and so happy. I heard one of her uncles tell her, the night before, that he expected she would be married in a boating dress, just drop in at the parson's, and go rowing or shooting for a wedding trip. She laughed, and said she was sorry to disappoint him, but for once she was going to be conventional. I wanted to ask him if he didn't know his niece well enough to give her credit for *good taste*, though she might not be exactly like everybody else.

The church was full of people, and I have only a bewildered impression of walking down the aisle with the bridal party, and standing with the rest, and hearing Mr. Boyd perform the service; and then the "I wills"—I remember them, they seemed to mean so much. Then there was a little bustle, and the music began again, and we walked out in the same order. There was a reception and breakfast for the relatives and intimate friends, and after that Mr. and Mrs. Chandler—I never shall get used to saying that—went away; and how deserted the house seemed, although several people stayed over-night, and how sorry I did feel for Mr. and Mrs. Forbes and Hammy. Mr. Boyd and I came away the next day, and as I said, I found ma and Charlie sick, and have been busy enough ever since, but not altogether in taking care of them, as you will believe, when I tell you that *we are to move from Oxley next week*. It seems too dreadful to be true, and it nearly breaks my heart to have to say that it is. I told you that it was talked of, in my last letter; but when pa told me we were really to go, it was as much of a shock as if I never had dreamed of it before. The only way I can bear it at all is by keeping so busy that I can't think, and there is plenty to do, for Sally and I are the only ones to do anything, and the auction takes place next week, and we are to go in a day or two after. Martin

has had to give up College, but he has gone to the Law School, and so won't be with us in our new *home*. It *can't* seem like home to me. If it was the poky little place we came from, even, it would be better than going among utter strangers, and yet I don't think it makes much difference where we go as long as I must leave all my dear kind friends behind.

You will write to me, Zandy, won't you? I shall need your letters more than ever. Direct them to Derryville, Ill. It is hard to give up my little room that I have enjoyed so much, thanks to Mr. Chandler and Miss Forbes. Your dear aunt Edith gave me a lovely toilet-set on my birth-day—my *nineteenth!* doesn't that sound old? Pa says everything has got to be sold, but I shan't let my presents go, even if I can't take them with me. Some day I may have an old maid's hall, and need them. Pa thinks girls ought to be married before they are twenty, and not be dependent on their fathers; but I am sure I don't know what ma and the children would do if I were married now. I think I am of a little use to them. I do try not to complain, and to see a bright side to it all, though you wouldn't think so from this letter; I have let myself tell you how badly I feel because it has seemed such a relief, and you mustn't think that I am always so dismal. I know I shall have my best Friend in Derryville as much as here, and I shall try to depend on Him; perhaps I have depended too much upon my earthly friends—it has been so sweet to have friends, and *such* ones as I have found in Oxley. But good-by, dear Zandy. Give much love to all. I am so glad Helen is so well. Your loving

CARRIE.

Zandy's reading of the letter had been much interrupted by expressions of interest and sympathy, and by choking sensations in Zandy's throat; and now Zandy burst forth vehemently:

"Mr. Reynolds is the very meanest man I ever heard of. Why does he drag his family—I don't care what becomes of any of them except Carrie, but she has to go where the rest do—why does he drag them away from Oxley, when they don't want to go? It is a burning shame."

"I suppose the simple truth is," said her uncle, "that his affairs are in a desperate case; and having lived in a fine house, with fine furniture and an appearance of wealth, in Oxley, he is not disposed to live there as poorly as he would be obliged to now. He is very much in debt there, too, I've no doubt. He is just the man to have lived on credit."

"If they are so poor, I don't see how Mart can go to the Law School," said Zandy. "Isn't it expensive?"

"Yes; but it is one of the by-no-means rare instances of giving to one member of a family all the advantages, and making the rest suffer for it. Martin is selfish and ambitious, and his father probably hopes to profit by his outlays for him, by-and-by."

"And Carrie is to slave for them all, and suffer more than they all, in the meantime!" exclaimed Zandy, indignantly.

"I shouldn't be surprised to see Martin on the bench one of these days," said Mr. Craighead. "He is clever in a certain way, and has boundless audacity."

"Rogues will have a millennium then!" said Royal, "as far as he can help them to it."

"No; you don't understand your man, my boy," said his father.

"What has come over your friend Sydney, William?" asked Mrs. Craighead. "I am afraid he is growing misanthropical; he used to be at mother's so much, and now they see so little of him."

Her husband shook his head: "I have my suspicions, you know, but they may be wholly unfounded. I am certain of one thing, however, that Sydney is as far from being a misanthrope as any man living, and that he has some good reason for his course of action, whatever it may be."

"Well, Grace," said Mrs. Craighead, as Grace entered the room with Mr. Hollister and Dick, "you have seen the Cathedral I suppose, but you have missed hearing the letters from Oxley."

"Have I?" returned Grace. "I'm so sorry! Weren't there any for me, from anybody?"

"To be sure," said Royal, handing her the letter; and seating himself before her in a listening attitude, he added, "and now we will listen to the reading of it."

Grace glanced at the direction carelessly, and putting it in her pocket, leaned back in her chair saying, "I am so tired."

"From whom, Grace?" asked her aunt.

"O—the letter, aunty? from—Clara Denning."

"Clara Denning, again!" exclaimed Zandy, "I didn't know you were so intimate with her. You keep up a lively correspondence."

"Does she write good letters, Gracie?" asked Dick.

"Yes—very good. Are they all well at Oxley, Aunt Louisa?"

"I say, Grace," cried Dick, "why don't you read your letter? Is that the way you treat mine, when you get them?"

"No, but I am tired," replied Grace, taking the letter slowly from her pocket and opening it.

"Why, how odd! such a difference between the inside and outside writing!" said Dick, whose quick eye had caught a glimpse of the open sheet, without really intending it; "the inside is so big and black."

Grace started when Dick first spoke, but answered quietly: "Clara writes a large hand. Her sister directed it, I suppose."

"Where is she?" asked Zandy.

"In New York," Grace replied.

"That is strange," returned Zandy. "She told me they were going to travel this summer."

"I suppose they could change their plans," said Dick.

"I suppose they could," replied Zandy.

Stephen had been standing near, talking with Mr. Craighead about the Cathedral, and now responded to Grace's look of child-like appeal by diverting attention from her and her letter.

The next day the drive to Fernet was again deferred, though the weather was perfect; no one could bear to go without Helen, and she was again only able to lie on the sofa and enjoy the view of Mont Blanc, gleaming in unclouded glory against the blue sky.

The next day the drive was not spoken of, for Helen was unable to leave her bed. The doctor made light of her weakness, but prescribed a day of absolute quiet, as her mother suggested that the letters might have been too exciting. So no one was admitted to her room, except her mother, until towards evening, when she seemed so much brighter that Mrs. Craighead went out for a drive, and Zandy was allowed to sit with her.

"Zandy," Helen said, after a little talk of other things, speaking always with an effort, because of her short breath, "do you think mamma really believes that I shall be well enough to go about with you all, and to travel again?"

"Why yes, of course she does, dear; we all know you will be."

Helen was silent for a time, and then she said, "You don't know how badly I feel to have you all just doing nothing, only waiting for me to get well; and you, darling—you don't even take walks and see things in the town with the boys and Grace."

"I would rather never see a castle or a mountain or a cathedral, than to leave you," replied Zandy. "I should be miserable, and hate the sights, so you needn't worry about me; only let me have my own way."

Helen stroked Zandy's bright hair with her thin little hand,

and as it dropped wearily on the coverlet, said, "I don't think I am getting well, Zandy."

"Oh, how can you feel so, darling?" said Zandy earnestly. "The doctor says you will be well, or a great deal better, soon, and of course he knows."

"I don't think he means it," replied Helen; "he can't; he wishes to comfort mamma.—There is something I should like to say to you, dear," she went on, with a look in her eyes that awed Zandy. "I know it will pain you, but I should like to feel that some one knows what I am so sure about, and I can't bear to tell mamma or papa yet. Could you let me tell you, and try to bear it quietly, for my sake? I am afraid it is selfish, but it would be such a comfort to talk to you of things I think of so much."

Zandy's heart beat suffocatingly, and she was filled with a terrible dread, as she looked into Helen's face, seeming to realize for the first time how very ill she was. As Zandy did not speak, Helen laid her hot hand on hers, and said, "Can't you let me say it? it will only be a little sooner than—you must know it."

"Yes, tell me,—I *will* bear it," replied Zandy, nerving herself to listen.

"I am so glad—you are so good and dear," said Helen; and after a moment's pause, she added, "What I want to say is, that I know—I feel sure—that I never shall be any better—that I shall lie here a few days or weeks more, and then go home to God. *Don't* look so, darling!"

Zandy's face had grown deathly pale, and she almost lost her self-control; but with a greater effort than she had ever made before, she repressed any outbreak of feeling, and tried to seem calm.

"I have felt that I wasn't going to get well ever since the morning I saw the mountain first; I am afraid I took more cold then, and I am sorry, for mamma's sake, that I was so careless; but I don't think it has made much difference in the time.—I have often had a feeling in my heart that said 'Never,' when you have all talked of things I should do when I was well; and even when I have talked, myself, about our 'coming out' together, I have always felt that it was uncertain. Now, I think it will soon come—that beautiful sleep from which we wake in heaven. Oh, I wish you could see it as I do—sometimes, not always. It isn't so hard Zandy, dear. You will all have each other and this lovely world, and I shall have Christ and Heaven.—You will miss me, I know, and I am sure that in a happy way I shall think of you, and wish to see you—

perhaps I *shall* see you;—if I might only be a ministering spirit to those I love, with power to help them!—I think God let me see Mont Blanc now, to give me an idea of heaven, and make me feel sure that I am not losing anything in going there.—'Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty'—it has really helped my faith in that promise, to have seen an earthly glory like that of my mountain."

Helen was silent for a time, and Zandy dared not speak, for fear of sobbing, but when voices were heard in Mrs. Craighead's room, Helen said, "They are coming now, but some time I want to tell you what I would like to have done with my things. You are to have the amber set, you know."

Zandy did not rush away to relieve her pent-up feelings, as she had done after a similar talk with Helen, more than a year ago. She obliged herself to sit still beside her, while her aunt and uncle told where they had been, and to listen calmly, when they talked of plans for other days, when Helen should be better—plans to which Helen tacitly assented, only saying, "It will be lovely, if I am well enough."

But Zandy passed a sleepless night; and during the days that followed, to speak or smile seemed almost an impossibility, with such a heavy load on her heart. It was not alone her grief at the thought of losing Helen, though that was almost more than she could endure, so tender and strong was her love for her sweet cousin; but death, that had always seemed so far off—a vague, distant possibility, even then too full of terrors to think of when she could help it—was brought very near, and made very real, through Helen's familiar, quiet contemplation of it, and Zandy's brave young heart shrank appalled from the dark mystery. It made life, that was opening before her like an endless dream of pleasure and happiness, seem for the time utterly worthless, and death and the great unknown future beyond, the only real things. She had pitied Helen often for not being well, and able to enjoy everything, as she did, and longed for the time when her present deprivations should all be made up to her in perfect health and unlimited enjoyment. But now she envied, much more than she pitied her, when she saw that she had no fears—only happy anticipations of heaven, and she would almost have changed places with her.

In spite of her grief and terrors and varied distresses—a weighty burden for her to bear alone; she listened to all Helen wished to say, carefully remembering every minutest direction, or expression of a wish, never letting her see that she shrank from the subject; and she could have done more than that, even, for the sake of seeing the look of peace on her dear face.

A week passed—a quiet anxious week of watching, on the part of the parents, for signs of returning strength; and on Helen's part, for tokens of some realization of the truth which she shrank from putting into words. She dreaded to bring the agony to her parents—so blind, and hoping against hope, as they were.

A week passed, and then a day dawned when the truth became a presence; but so still, so sweet, that rebellious hearts were hushed, for the time, into seeming submission. None dared complain or resist while, as peacefully as a rose opens its petals to the light, Helen's spirit passed beyond "the veil of days," and was "at home with God."

CHAPTER XXX.

THE WORST OF IT.

NEARLY three months have passed since Helen's death—months of grief to her mother, unrelieved by faith or resignation; months of sadness and unbroken quiet to those walking within the shadow of the mother's gloom; and now it is September—a cold, dismal night, and the Craighheads' parlor is hardly more cheerful than the wet, deserted streets. The room is large and handsomely furnished, but the coloring is rather sombre, needing bright lights, a glowing fire and happy people to make it pleasant on a night like this. Lacking these, it seems full of shadows. The old-fashioned portraits on the frescoed walls might pass for the grim guardians of its dignity, frowning down as they do upon its occupants, Mr. Hollister, Grace and Zandy. The black dresses of the two girls are in keeping with the prevailing air of the room.

Zandy stands at the window, against which the rain beats drearily, looking out at the lights shining dimly through the misty air, and at their quivering reflections in the lake and the wet street, and upon the occasional passers, who hurry by, anxious only to escape the storm. She finds nothing without to change the tone of her thoughts, and they turn restlessly from one sad theme to another: longings for Helen and home, pictures from the dreary monotony of the summer, dread of the winter's loneliness, envy of the boys and her uncle, who have gone home to America, and are by this time, probably, safely landed, perhaps even on their way to Oxley—no wonder she grows tired of a reverie that has nothing bright in it. She leaves the window with a sigh, and approaches the table, where Grace and Stephen are seated with a book of engravings between them. Their subdued voices have given an undercurrent to Zandy's thoughts, and she sees that their talk has absorbed them, whatever the subject may have been, for the book is open at the very same picture they were examining when she left the table, twenty minutes before. They are silent now; Grace plays with a bit of Swiss carving, and Stephen only looks up to say, "Have you been well entertained by the views outside?"

"Wonderfully!" Zandy replies, and Stephen falls to turning the leaves of the book, absently.

Zandy stands for a moment with her hand on the back of a chair, looking wistfully at the faces before her; and concluding, as neither Grace nor Stephen seem disposed to speak again, that she has interrupted them, turns slowly and leaves the room.

She pauses at her aunt's door, and presently knocks: "May I come in?" she says.

"Yes, come in," her aunt replies; but one would hardly recognize the tones as belonging to Mrs. William Craighead, they are so melancholy.

"I can't see where you are, at all, Aunt Louisa," Zandy says. "Don't you want lights?—it is so dark and cold to night."

"I am here, by the window. No, I don't care for lights yet."

Zandy finds a chair and they sit in silence for a few minutes; then Zandy remarks, trying to speak cheerfully, "I suppose Uncle William and the boys are landed by this time."

"I suppose they are," Mrs. Craighead returns, with little interest in her voice.

"I do wish we could hear from them sooner," Zandy goes on, "it seems so long to wait; but we shall have letters from Oxley to-morrow or the next day, and that will be something."

"I am sorry you are so homesick," her aunt says, gloomily. "It was a great mistake that you stayed with me—you should have gone home with your uncle. I was very selfish to keep you."

"Don't say so, Aunt Louisa," Zandy exclaims, "I can't help thinking of home, but I am never sorry I stayed with you. I wouldn't have left you.—If I could only be a comfort to you—it was Helen's wish that I should take her place"—

"As if any one could," groans Mrs. Craighead.

"I know no one can," Zandy returns, shocked at her own thoughtlessness, "and I can't expect to comfort you, really, but if you could be glad to have me with you, for her sake, I should be so much happier."

"I am glad to have you with me, child; as glad as I can be for anything.—You have seemed happy lately, I think, and you will be happier still, when you begin your studying and your music. I ought to be glad that you can be happy, but *she* loved you so, Zandy—I can but wonder at your forgetting so soon."

"Forgetting! Aunt Louisa!" Zandy exclaims.

"The young are easily comforted, I know. I don't blame you," her aunt says.

Zandy is distressed by her aunt's tone of reproach, as she has been once or twice before of late. Her love for Helen's mother had strengthened with her love for Helen; and since Helen's death she has longed to be taken into her heart—not to fill the vacant place, but to be to her aunt what Helen's sister might have been, if she had had one. She has felt that she could give a child's devotion to the stricken mother. But while Mrs. Craighead begged to have Zandy left with her, and could not have spared her, she is too absorbed in her own grief to think of Zandy's needs—the affection and tenderness her young heart craves.

Zandy did not hesitate, when it was left for her to decide whether she would go or stay; and the pain it cost her to be left behind, when the parting came, no one suspected, except Royal, who kept it to himself. As she seldom speaks of Helen, no one knows that she misses her every hour of every day, or guesses that it is her gentle influence that makes her hide her grief for others' sake, and makes her so kind to Grace.

She has no heart to answer her aunt's reproach, and sits listening to the beating rain, and wondering how she can bear the long absence from home, and the loneliness of the winter, if the comfort of being a comfort to Helen's mother is denied her. She does not understand that grief, unduly cherished, perverts and blinds the mind—makes it jealously exacting, and suspicious and unjust—that it is the most unreasoning form of selfishness. She does not know yet that her aunt, who has always seemed to her so wise and strong, is weak and helpless now, through having refused the only cure for afflicted souls—trustful submission—and is growing weaker with every added day of rebellious repining. She vaguely reverences the sorrow that refuses to be comforted, and has a feeling of remorse, as if she had been unfaithful to Helen in having tried not to look and act as desolate as she feels. Her clear perceptions will discover the truth by-and-by, but now, if a question should arise in her mind as to whether her aunt had a right to cherish her grief, and make herself the centre of sympathy, and deepen, tenfold, the shadow cast by Helen's loss, she would banish it, and hate herself for having had such a thought.

Tea is announced while they sit in silence, and Pauline comes with lights. Mrs. Craighead goes with Zandy into the parlor, and takes her place quietly. She has hardly been in the street since Helen's death, and has seen no one but the family; but there are duties she obliges herself to observe, and one is, to

be always in her place at the head of her own table. Grace calls her "the black shadow," and, indeed, a sadder, more oppressive presence could hardly be imagined.

Grace and Stephen make no effort at conversation, and Zandy is silent too; so the air of the room is not enlivened by the tea-drinking. As soon as it is over, Mrs. Craighead returns to her sad musings, and Zandy, finding that a game of chess has been agreed upon between Grace and Mr. Hollister, goes to her own room, and relieves her loneliness a little by writing to some of the friends she longs for so much.

The next morning proved as bright as the evening had been dismal, and Zandy felt the cheering influence of the sunshine. There was the pleasant prospect of letters from Oxley, too, and an unexpected diversion came in the course of the morning.

Zandy was busy with a book; Grace was making out a list of little commissions for Stephen to execute in Paris, whither he was going by the evening train, and Stephen sat by the window reading the paper, when a carriage drove up.

"Who are these I wonder?" Stephen said, looking out, and Grace went to the window.

"Do you know them?" Stephen asked, as Grace uttered an exclamation of surprise, and started back.

"Yes!" Grace replied; "it is the Dennings!"

"The Dennings!" cried Zandy, springing up, and running to the window. "How perfectly lovely! I am so glad!"

"I don't see why you should be so delighted," said Grace. "You don't know them very well."

"They are from America, and that is enough," replied Zandy. "You must be delighted, Grace," she added.

Grace colored, as she answered; "Aunt Louisa won't see them, she refuses everybody."

"I shall see them," Zandy declared, with her old vehemence, "if I have to visit with them on the side-walk."

There was a knock at the door, which Zandy answered, expecting to see a servant with the cards; but there stood Clara and her sister. The girls embraced as if they had been bosom friends.

"We were determined not to be sent away this time," Clara said. "I told mamma I wouldn't leave Geneva without making a desperate attempt; and I wouldn't send our cards, for fear we should be refused. Oh, how do you do, Miss Gellert?" she said, as Grace came towards her with changing color. "I didn't know you were with your aunt and cousins; I suppose I did hear of it, too, when you came, but I had forgotten it.—

What a pleasant apartment you have, it is so nice being so near the lake," she added, turning again to Zandy.

"Yes, it is pleasant," Zandy replied, recovering composure sufficiently to introduce Mr. Hollister to the young ladies; and excusing herself, she went to ask her aunt if she would see Mr. and Mrs. Denning. Mrs. Craighead could not make an exception of them, as she told Zandy, even if she had felt like meeting them, and sent her regrets. So Clara sent her sister to ask their father and mother to drive on for half an hour, and come back for them.

"I was sorry not to see you when we were in Geneva before," Clara said, as she seated herself beside Zandy. "I thought perhaps you would see me, even if your aunt didn't feel disposed to receive papa and mamma—I was so anxious to hear all about dear Helen; you know she was one of my best friends, at least I loved her more than I did any other girl in school."

"I didn't know that you called," Zandy replied. "I didn't know you were in Geneva, or even in Europe," she finished, with a nervous little laugh.

"Oh, what a shame! I thought the whole world knew we had come to Europe—it was such a grand event. We had no expectation of it until late in the spring, and then father decided so suddenly—only a week before we sailed, but you can imagine how glad we were. Yes, we were in Geneva two months ago, just after Helen's death: we saw the sad news in the papers, and that was the first we knew of your being here. I was always looking for your names in the hotel registers, and for your faces among the people we met, travelling."

"We were at Nice until June, and came here soon after," Zandy said, with a hasty look at Grace who had been talking very fast with Clara's sister, and at that moment was appealing to Mr. Hollister in respect to something of which they were speaking.

"Then you haven't travelled any yet?"

"No—very little. We were three weeks in Paris."

"Of course you enjoyed that, but I believe you will like London better; I did, a great deal."

"Oh, how could you?" cried Grace, with eagerness. "I can't conceive of anything lovelier than Paris, and London must be so dingy and dull."

"Almost everybody likes Paris best, I know," replied Miss Denning. "Perhaps it was because I have English blood in my veins, and it was a loyal instinct that made me delight in London so much. You must tell me what you think about

it," she said to Zandy. "I wish you would correspond with me now, I shall be so anxious to hear what you are doing, and you won't be so occupied that you can't write letters, will you?"

"Oh no, we shall have nothing but our studies—I should like to write to you and hear from you very much."

"I used often to think about writing to Helen, before we came abroad—at least, to wish that I might; but when I went to bid her good-by, before you sailed, her mother said she did not intend to let her correspond with any one, as she was going for health alone. I didn't feel well enough acquainted with you, then, to propose writing, though now I feel as if we had been always friends—it makes such a difference, meeting American people in Europe. In Brussels I came very near rushing up to some one whom I had only met in New York without ever being introduced to her, and claiming her for an intimate acquaintance. Nell declares that I looked ecstatic."

"Didn't you like Brussels?" asked Grace. "I am sure I should, they say it is so much like Paris."

"Yes, it is like Paris—papa calls it a miniature Paris. I liked it very well: we saw some perfectly lovely pictures there."

Grace seemed eager to know just where Clara had been and what she had seen, and Clara was too enthusiastic in regard to her travels not to be ready to answer questions. But presently she exclaimed: "Oh, dear, there is the carriage, and I haven't heard a word about Helen. You will write to me, though, won't you? I will write first."

"Yes," Zandy answered, and yielding to an impulse born of various bitter feelings, she added—"if Grace doesn't mind."

She was heartily ashamed, and would gladly have recalled the words the instant they were uttered. Clara looked from Zandy's crimson face to Grace's pale one, in perplexed surprise.

"I don't know what you mean," she said, smiling, as no one spoke for an instant. "What 'Grace' do you refer to, and why should she mind?"

"I thought you corresponded with Grace," said Zandy, desperately, feeling that somehow she had changed places with Grace, and was the one humiliated.

"Oh, no! how could you think so? We never wrote to each other, did we, Miss Gellert? We were in the same classes the last year, but we—you had other intimate friends. You have made an odd mistake, you see," she said lightly, laying her hand on Zandy's, still perplexed and not a little curious, but too well-bred to press a subject that was so clearly disagreeable. "How long shall you be in Geneva, do you think?"

"All winter, at least," Zandy replied, trying to recover from her confusion. "I don't know when Aunt Louisa will feel that she can go home."

"Because Helen is buried here—I suppose she will find it a great trial, whenever she goes away. Why was she not taken home?"

"She asked to be buried here, if she"—Zandy stopped to keep back the tears, and Clara said:—

"I am afraid you will be very lonely, if you live so quietly. Will Mr. Hollister remain with you?"

"No, he goes to Paris to-night, to join the family in which he is to teach. Grace and I are to have masters in music and some other things."

"How dreadfully stern and severe he looks," whispered Clara, with a furtive glance at Stephen. "But I am going to speak to him, notwithstanding. Mr. Hollister," she said, drawing nearer to where Stephen stood apart from the others—they were all standing now—"I must tell you that I am indignant with Mr. Schuyler for taking your sister away from Miss Haslitt's. The girls wrote me about the time there was at the close of the year—Miss Haslitt and all were so sorry to lose Miss Hollister; and as for me, I am thankful that I have finished, so that I needn't go back to school and not find her there. The girls all went to the wedding, and they said she made a lovely bride."

"All brides are lovely, are they not?" returned Stephen.

"Oh, I suppose so. Where are they now, Mr. Hollister?"

"My sister's last letter was written at Newport. But I suppose they are in town by this time."

"I am so glad they are to live in New York. I shall call on Mrs. Schuyler as soon as we get back. I know they will have a lovely home."

"The good-bys were said, and the sisters took their leave. Zandy went with them to the stairs, and though dreading it, re-entered the parlor, feeling that not to do so would be cowardly. If Grace wished to express her indignation, she should have the opportunity, and if she would let her, Zandy was ready to ask her forgiveness for placing her in such a terrible situation—so far as she was responsible.

Her steps were arrested, as she was crossing the room with as much unconsciousness as she could assume, by the sight of Mr. Hollister's face—the look of scorn with which he was regarding Grace made Zandy shudder. Grace stood at a little distance trembling, with her hands clasped tightly together; but while Zandy gazed at her in pity and dismay, she suddenly

went to Stephen with hasty steps, not deterred by his repelling gesture.

"Have you forgotten your promise?" she asked, lifting her eyes timidly to his face.

"What promise?" asked Stephen coldly.

"Not to decide against me in anything. I can explain it so that it won't seem so bad. You must let me tell you all."

"I promised to judge for myself of your words and deeds—I hardly need to assure you that I shall keep that promise in this case. I will hear your explanation."

"Oh me!" moaned Grace, "everything is against me—what shall I do! I wish I were dead!"

She sank sobbing into a chair, and Zandy could bear it no longer. She kneeled beside her, and put her arms about her. Grace started at finding Zandy in the room, even, and with an angry look pushed her away. But a second thought, which was that it might move Mr. Hollister if she seemed gentle and forgiving, made her put her own arms about Zandy's neck, and sob on her shoulder.

"Poor Grace," said Zandy, brokenly, "I am so sorry for you! I am sure you had some reason—that seemed a good one. Don't cry so. We will forget it—and you will forgive me, won't you?"

"Yes," sobbed Grace.

Zandy lifted her tearful eyes to Stephen's face, in mute appeal for kindness and a gentle judgment for Grace. He met her look with an expression that she did not fully understand, but that seemed less harsh and contemptuous than the one his face had worn, and walked towards the door. Grace started up on hearing his footsteps, and following him, seized his arm.

"You are not going to leave me so? You must not, you shall not—*dear* Stephen?"

Stephen released his arm from her grasp, saying, "I told you I would hear your explanation, Grace. I will see you by-and-by."

He would have opened the door, but Grace stood before him, and with a wild gesture summoned Zandy.

"Come and tell him to be kind to me, Zandy—tell him that it is not so bad as he thinks, and he ought not to treat me so; he says he loves me, and we are the same as engaged."

"Engaged—engaged!" Zandy repeated, as if to assure herself whether that word were the one Grace had used, and she looked from one to the other with widely dilated eyes.

"I didn't mean really, yet," said Grace, cowering before Stephen's scornful look; "but we shall be some time, at least we

should have been," she added sadly; "and he ought to let me defend myself, before he casts me off. Oh dear, how miserable I am."

Grace sobbed again; and Zandy fixed her eyes, full of grave, womanly feeling, upon Stephen: "He will not cast you off, Grace, never fear;—at least without letting you explain," she added, as a sudden, almost sickening sense of the enormity of Grace's fault came over her.

"What do you think are the chances of my being satisfied with her explanation?" asked Stephen, bitterly.

"It is not for me to judge," Zandy answered gravely. "It is not generous to be harsh towards any one who is in trouble, and"—she hesitated—"and you should not judge Grace as you would one who had—had been differently situated; grandmamma would say that, I am sure."

Zandy drew Grace gently away from the door, and opened it, but before it was fairly closed behind her, Grace had seized her hand: "Zandy, promise not to tell Aunt Louisa of this—this last. She doesn't know it—nobody does. You won't tell, will you?"

"No," replied Zandy, "it is for you to tell—not for me."

Pauline met Zandy in the hall, and said Mrs. Craighead would like to see her for a little while. Zandy answered that she could not come quite yet—she would come soon; but it was an hour or two before she went to her aunt's room.

When Zandy had left the room, and Grace had returned and closed the door, Stephen placed a chair for her, and seated himself near her, saying that he was ready to listen to whatever she might wish to say; and then waited in silence for her to begin.

"I can't tell you anything if you are so stern," sobbed Grace. "How can you be so unkind?"

"I have no wish to treat you unkindly," Stephen answered, "but the disclosures made by means of Miss Denning's visit—I could almost make bold to consider it providential—are not pleasant. Grace," he exclaimed, suddenly dropping the cold, measured tone he had assumed, "let us have no equivocations or affectations now, for God's sake, but the simple and the whole truth. If our friendship is to continue"—Stephen paused, feeling that he was violating the truth in so far admitting the possibility that it might continue—"all this must be made as clear as sunlight to my mind; nothing less will satisfy me."

"You don't love me—you never did, or you couldn't talk to me so," sobbed Grace, with a touch of childish petulance.

"We will speak of that by-and-by," said Stephen. "For the present, we have only to get at the truth with regard to the

letters. Perhaps a few questions may help you," he added, as Grace did not speak. "Let me ask you, then," he continued, interpreting silence to mean consent, "and let me have a simple, straight-forward answer—who is the person whose letters you have represented as being written by Miss Denning?"

Grace hesitated, tried to answer, and then cried, "I don't think that you ought to question me so. Girls always have little secrets that they don't care to tell. I haven't asked you whom *you* correspond with. I think you might trust me—dear Stephen."

"Trust you!" repeated Stephen, in a bitter tone, "it *is* strange, is it not, that my faith in you is shaken? But I will not press my question," he added, rising. "I understood you to desire a chance to explain the little mystery about the letters. I have no right to"—

Grace interrupted him, saying, "Yes, you have a right. I will tell you—if you only wouldn't be so severe and cold."

Stephen seated himself again reluctantly, and as he did not repeat his question, Grace said at length, in an almost inaudible voice, "The letters were from—Martin Reynolds."

A slight smile crossed Stephen's face: "And why did you consider it necessary to conceal the fact of your correspondence with that estimable young man?"

"Aunt Louisa didn't like us to correspond with young men, and he *would* write to me," answered Grace, in the same low tone.

"Your last letter came from him last week, I believe?"

"Yes; but I shouldn't have let him write to me if—after we—if we had become—I haven't written to him in a great while."

"The mere fact of your writing to him or receiving letters from him is of small importance," replied Stephen coldly. "I believe you volunteered the assurance, when the last letter came, that you would let me read it, if it were not that Clara had made you promise not to show her letters to any one?"

Grace was silent, and pressed her handkerchief closer to her face.

"I have no wish to judge you," said Stephen, gazing at her very much as one might at a fair white lily that had a scorpion in its heart. He could almost have doubted the existence of truth itself, in his first conviction of Grace's utter falseness.

The fact that she was in a sense bound to him, though by his own folly, aggravated her offences into sins against himself, and added the sting of having been duped and wronged to his keen appreciation of their innate heinousness.

It was only a vivid remembrance of Zandy's plea for Grace, and the words, "It is not generous to be harsh to those who are in trouble," that kept back the bitter condemnation that rose to his lips.

The long silence frightened Grace as much as the fiercest words could have done. She looked at him anxiously, and saw neither love nor pity in his face; but she was desperate, and said pleadingly, "It is dreadful, but you will forgive me, won't you, Stephen, and be my friend and help me to be good and truthful!"—and she laid her hand on his arm.

"I am afraid I haven't charity and patience enough to be a safe helper," Stephen replied after a pause, regarding with a touch of pity, the face raised so humbly to his. "I can give you a word of advice, if you will let me; but the friend you could depend upon, as you suggest, should be wiser and gentler than I am."

"Do you mean to give me up, then?" asked Grace, wondering, as she spoke, if she should be very unhappy if he did.

Stephen hesitated, with very much the same wonder in his mind.

"You would not choose for a friend one who did not trust you"—he said at length.

"Or love me, either," cried Grace. "I *know* you don't love me; if you did, you couldn't be so angry with me for anything I might do. I only hope I may learn to hate you," she added with sudden bitterness.

"I sincerely hope you may, if it will make you any happier," Stephen answered. "But you will allow me to give you that word of advice, and then I will relieve you of my presence. Tell your aunt of your correspondence with Mr. Reynolds, and hereafter, let all you do be open and frank—it is a lesson I take to myself, as well—and have no secrets, at least none that you would be ashamed to have come to light. As to what has passed between us, no one could condemn me more severely than I do myself. I deserve no forbearance."

"I don't see that it was such a dreadful thing to—to care for me," said Grace, pouting.

"It was a dreadful thing to violate your aunt's confidence in me by speaking to you of love and—an engagement, and I bitterly repent it. I have no expectation but that she will regard me with abhorrence."

"She needn't know it," suggested Grace.

"She *shall* know it," exclaimed Stephen, almost roughly. "Do you suppose I would leave her house without telling her?"

"Let me tell her," said Grace, gently. "I would a great deal rather, than have you. I will tell her when you are gone."

Stephen was on the point of refusing Grace's request; but the words seemed too ungracious when he would have spoken them, and he replied that if she preferred it, she might: "I feel like a coward, shirking my duty," he added, his face flushing at the thought of meeting Mrs. Craighead, and bidding her good-by without making his confession. "You had better let me see her now—it will be easier for you, and for me too."

"No, I would rather tell her—please let me, it is my last request," said Grace, the tears coming again. She could hardly have defined the motive that led her to make it, only that it seemed to put a little farther off a disagreeable revelation.

"Very well"—and Stephen offered his hand to her, saying, "Little happiness has grown out of your choosing me as a friend; but forgive me, and believe that it was not in my heart to bring you trouble. I shall always be glad to hear that you are happy."

A gust of regrets rushed over Grace as he turned away from her, and she called to him, but he shut the door without looking back, and hurried to his own room.

He would have given much to avoid meeting Zandy again, but there was no help for it, as he could not absent himself from dinner, and must say good-by.

He felt like a culprit in Mrs. Craighead's presence, and could not even seem at ease, an inability for which he was heartily disgusted with himself.

Grace did not make her appearance at dinner. When Mrs. Craighead sent for her, word was brought that she had a headache, and begged to be excused.

The dinner passed quietly. Zandy was silent, and Stephen only replied to Mrs. Craighead's remarks and questions as to his journey. She expressed the hope that they should hear from him often; Stephen hesitated, and colored, and answered that he would certainly let her know of his safe arrival.

He would have said good-by at once, when dinner was over, but Mrs. Craighead asked him to wait till she had seen Grace.

"If she is going to be ill, I cannot let you go, Mr. Hollister," she said nervously.

Stephen walked to the window, and Zandy sat still without speaking, during the few minutes that Mrs. Craighead was out of the room. She came back much relieved.

"Grace is fast asleep," she said, "and doesn't look ill. It was only a headache, I presume, and a nap will cure it.—I feel extremely sorry to have you leave us, Mr. Hollister," she added,

"you seem like one of the family, and we shall miss you as such.—Helen used to say that you seemed like an older brother to her, and for her sake, as well as your own, I shall always regard you as one of us. You have given me every reason to love and trust you."

There were tears in her eyes as she offered her hand to Stephen. He took it with a slight hesitation, saying, "I wish I were more worthy of your confidence, Mrs. Craighead."

She looked at him in surprise, the tone was so unlike himself, but she said, "Remember me to your mother and sister, when you write. Good-by."

Stephen shook hands hastily with Zandy, and departed.

CHAPTER XXXI.

OXLEY AND DERRYVILLE.

THE next day the longed-for letters came, and they were a great comfort to Zandy, on the whole. Mrs. Craighead wrote :

OXLEY, August 31, 186-

MY DEAREST ZANDY:—The fact that we are so soon to see Uncle William and the boys makes my heart sink, even while I look forward to their coming with so much joy. It is not the return we hoped for, but we will be patient and not complain. We must not forget the lesson of faith taught us by our sweet Helen herself, and I try to exercise it in regard to you, my dear child. I bear you on my heart to our Father constantly, and never doubt his watch-care over you, and yet I cannot help longing to have you safe within the shelter of your own home. We miss you sadly ; but we consented to your staying away from us because it seemed right, and now we must not repine at your absence. You, my love, will find your happiness in the consciousness that you are doing what Helen would have desired above all things—devoting yourself to her poor, sorrowing mother ; and I know that when your warm heart is interested, you feel no sacrifice. But after all you need help, my child. Your letters show that you are brave ; but as the weeks and months pass in the isolation of the life you must lead in Geneva, you will have many sad hours, and how can you bear them unless you have help ? and who can help you except that Friend who is as near to you in Geneva as in Oxley, and who knows your every need ? My child, if I could feel assured that you trust Him, that you go to Him with every grief and perplexity, how rejoiced I should be ; and how grieved I shall be, if in this first real emergency of your young life you fail to learn the lessons intended, and try to walk in your own strength.

I wish very much that I could be endowed, for a time, with some kind of sight that would let me take a look at you in your winter quarters. Uncle William and the boys will give us helpful descriptions, and your letters make us imagine that we see things as they are ; and then comes the vexatious certainty, that imagination *cannot* draw trustworthy pictures of realities. To my old-fashioned notions, an 'apartment' seems

a poor imitation of a home, and yet I have no doubt it is enjoyable—giving the independence of housekeeping, without the care. You may console yourself, my dear, with the assurance that things here look the very same as when you left us—nothing is changed.

And you really insist upon being informed of the sad things that happen, as well as the pleasant ones ? I trust there will be nothing *really* sad to tell you, and it seems hardly worth while to trouble you with the inevitable little shadows that will seem so much darker to you, looking from such a distance. For instance, we all agreed that it was not best to say anything about Mr. Boyd's being ill, as it would only make Zandy have a sad thought or two ; but Zandy is greedy for every bit of home news, and threatens to imagine something worse than could happen, if we do not promise to tell all—foolish child that she is. And perhaps by the time you get this letter he will be nearly well. The first intimation we had of his not being well, came to us in a way that made the news very startling. We returned from our trip—to Niagara, you know—late Saturday night. The next morning at church there was a stranger in the pulpit ; but we thought little of that, until he rose, and asked the prayers of the congregation for their beloved pastor, who was very ill. It was a sad time, and we were filled with painful apprehensions, but could learn no particulars till after the service. Then we found that it was a sudden attack of brain fever. The doctor had forbidden any one's seeing him, so we could only hope and pray for his recovery. He is still quite ill, at the end of three weeks, but the doctor is encouraged, and we all feel very sanguine as to the result. When he is able to be moved we intend to bring him here, and do all in our power for his comfort, and you shall have frequent bulletins, so fear nothing my love.

The other letters that are to go with this will tell you everything else you will care to hear, so I will say good-by now, with love to Grace. My next letter shall be to her.

Your devoted

GRANDMOTHER.

The "frequent bulletins" received during the next two or three weeks were not very encouraging, and Zandy could not throw off the depression caused by Mr. Boyd's illness. It made everything seem uncertain, and she opened each letter with trembling.

At last, however, her fears were over ; Mr. Boyd was not only out of danger, but had been removed to her grandfather's house ; and the relief made her more lighthearted than she had been before since Helen's death.

A little later came the following letters. This from Edith Zandy read first.

OXLEY, October —, 186—.

MY DARLING ZANDY :—I have written to Aunt Louisa, but I am not satisfied to have you learn of my happiness from anybody but myself. Grandmamma and grandpapa think and speak of you as a little girl still, but I know you are grown to be a maiden, fully able to appreciate the beauty of a true, happy love story. So, dear, it is with an eager pleasure which makes me smile at myself, that I tell you mine—I am engaged to be married to your friend Mr. Boyd. I have loved him for years—indeed I hardly know when I began to love him. You can imagine how my exile was both embittered and sweetened by this love—for until a year ago, when I came home, I never had felt more than a passing doubt of his loving me, although he never had told me that he did in words; the separation was the bitter part. And the coming home—I can see now that it was in kindness the cloud was allowed to gather and rest over us for a time, for how could I have endured the joy of such a meeting as I had dreamed of so often on my island? It was better to have the rapture of the home-coming first, and the other now, though I rebelled bitterly, and was not as grateful as I ought to have been for my great blessings, because I could not have everything. The cloud that shut out the light of love seemed often to shadow all my happiness, and I was obliged to struggle hard to keep from casting a gloomy reflection from my heart over my dear home.

It seems now that all the self-control upon which I so much prided myself did not blind mother to the truth, and I see that she was full of tenderest concern, and helping me, as she can so well, when I fancied I was sparing her all knowledge of my pain.

When, on that Sunday, I heard that Mr. Boyd was at the point of death, had not the shock kindly stunned me, I should have cried out before all the people that I could not bear it. Then the days of suspense that followed until the danger was past, and the yet longer ones of waiting until he was able to be brought here—how I nerved myself to guard my secret, while I should devote myself to him with all a *sister's* untiring kindness—how I studied, like a school task, the welcome I would give him, the commonplace expressions of sympathy with which I would cover the intensity of our first meeting. I had little need to remember them—one look into his haggard, wasted face, and I had seen all that I had despaired of ever finding there. And since then what happiness we have had—what perfect contentment and rest. Sydney is gaining in strength, though slowly, surely, every day, and so there is not even an anxious thought to mar our gladness. We

only long for you, dear Zandy—and the other loved ones who can never come to us—to share it.

We know that the future may—must have stern realities for us, as it has for every one; but we do not let fears of what is to come cast a shadow over these perfect days; and why should we, when even in darkness our Father, who loves us and has blessed us so far beyond our hopes, will be our Father and love us still? We do not even trouble ourselves to wonder much at the blindness that has made us walk apart the past year, when our hearts were together.

If I could be a fairy godmother to you, dear, I would work a spell that would give you all the sweetness without the pain of my love story; and yet why should I wish for the help of magic, when your story is written by a kinder hand than mine could be, and one that has all the power for good?

Really, as I glance over these pages, along which my pen has been running in such eager haste, I do wonder if Zandy will not smile, and I believe I have blushed a little, and had a faint impulse to tuck the sheets in a quiet corner of the fire. But I am not afraid, after all, and I do not begrudge one word I have written you, my darling.

My patient says I have given too much time to you, but I think it is to myself and to him that this letter is devoted. The truth is, he is bent on writing to you himself, and is afraid I shall leave him nothing to say. It will not make you homesick, will it, darling, if I tell you that we miss you and talk about you and long for you more and more? You know we do without my telling it, and the certainty of so much love and such earnest prayers as follow and enfold you, must help you to bear the absence from us the more bravely. Aunt Louisa would be desolate indeed without you. There are not many girls so young as you, dear, who are able to be so unselfishly useful—you are highly honored.

With warmest love,

Your devoted, happy

AUNT EDITH.

There was a letter from Mr. Boyd enclosed in Edith's. He wrote:

MY DEAR ALEXANDRA: You see how unsteady my hand is—what crooked letters it makes—but I cannot allow this envelope addressed to you to be sealed without enclosing my testimony to the sweetness and supreme beauty of these days, and I have obtained permission to add a brief postscript.

I have been sitting with idle hands, but very busy thoughts, while the letter already bestowed in the envelope was being written. I

could almost aver that every scene, in each of my many visits to this dear home, has been vividly before my mind, in the short space of half an hour—from the day when I first entered its hospitable door with your Uncle William, in my first College vacation, and I received my first welcome from the beautiful little brown-eyed girl who ran with open arms to meet her brother, to the day, a week ago, when I was so kindly brought "to be nursed and cured." That beautiful little brown-eyed girl—how happy-hearted and gay, how spirited and gentle, and reserved and winning, how trustful and loving she was! I had no sister, and this little girl I took to my heart at once and loved her as I felt I should have loved a sister like her, and she adopted me as one of her brothers, after a few days. She made me acquainted with her dolls, her books, her pets and flowers, and when we parted we were fast friends, and our correspondence began without delay.

During all the years of my College and Seminary life I saw my sister often, and watched the maturing of her lovely traits and her many mental gifts. Then I came to Oxley and saw her nearly every day, and I began to find that I regarded her less and less as a sister, while I loved her more and more. But I could not assure myself that she cared for me more than as a brother, and I dreaded to break the spell of our pleasant relations, lest I should lose her altogether. So I waited, trusting in time to win the love I coveted so much. Her going to Europe—a sudden plan, as you know, dear Alexandra—came upon me like a thunder-clap; but I would not trouble her then with a decision to make; and I felt, too, that it was but right to leave her free—unfettered by promises, for she was young, and had seen but little of the world. I was pretty sure of her affection, and had unbounded faith in her steadfastness, or I never could have been so generous, or borne *the year* of her absence so cheerfully. You know how the one year was lengthened into four years, and how, during three of them, we thought of her as an angel in heaven.

When she was restored to her home, after her long, sad banishment, I hastened to her with as much assurance as if an accredited messenger from heaven had told me that she had been spared *for me*, and was only waiting for me to claim her.—She was here, and the brown eyes were the very same, only lovelier if possible, but I did not see myself reflected in them; she seemed to stand far above me, and to look down upon me as an angel might look upon any human being for whom he had a heavenly sympathy, and I drew back, as much abashed, and as hopeless, as if she had been really the glorified spirit of whom I had dreamed.

And lo! here is my little brown-eyed girl, my sister, friend, angel, all in one, sitting by my side, my promised wife—belonging to me for evermore. And now, have I your blessing, Zandy? You cannot think that

I deserve such a blessing—no man living does; but will you not make the best of me—letting my high appreciation of the gift cover a multitude of sins and defects, and take me into the very select circle of your dearest friends and relatives? I shall wait anxiously to hear your verdict.

One little word I would whisper in your ear before closing: I sincerely trust that you will be at home by the spring, or early summer, at latest!

Your old-time friend and sometime uncle,

SIDNEY BOYD.

Zandy read these letters with mingled emotions. Utter amazement was at first uppermost, for the possibility of such a thing as an engagement between her Aunt Edith and Mr. Boyd had never once been suggested to her mind. Then came a feeling of hearty gladness; she could not help seeing that it was a lovely arrangement, and only wondered that she had never thought of it before, it seemed so suitable and natural, and she was quite ready to give Mr. Boyd her blessing. But at last all other feelings were swallowed up in a desperate homesickness—a longing to be where everybody was cheerful and happy, and the other letters were kept waiting for a reading a long time.

There was one from Carrie Reynolds that served to divert her. It read:

DERRYVILLE, Oct. — 186—.

MY DEAR ZANDY: How good you have been to me, and how bad I have been—if it is bad for me not to write to you. But the days come and go without my being able to find a half hour that I could give to you, and the days grow to weeks and months, and you never hear a word to let you know how much I think about you and how dearly I love you. Your letters, dear Zandy, have been like glimpses of heaven to me, with their descriptions of beautiful scenery and lovely things. I often think how hard it must be for you to stay away from your dear home and friends so long, and by your letters I can see that you have a lonely time in Geneva. But oh, Zandy, you have grand mountains and that beautiful lake and river to delight your eyes, and you must be thankful for that. You don't know what sort of a place Derryville is, do you? I had no heart, when I wrote before, to tell you anything about myself, having just heard of dear Helen's death; so now I will give you a little description of this doleful town. If you can imagine a place as much less attractive than Granby as Granby is than Oxley, and ten times worse than that, you may have some faint idea of Derryville. Right in the midst of a flat, dreary country, it is set down, without the shadow of an excuse for being here, that I can see. The few people

could vegetate somewhere else just as well, and indeed they would never be missed if they were out of the world altogether. And the houses—nothing but wooden boxes of all sizes, with “winders” and “chimbleys;” they would make a nice bonfire, and there would be small waste of paint or pains-taking.

If you could but see the place after a week's rain! The clouds seem to have a special fancy for emptying themselves here, and the mud is at least a foot deep, the blackest thickest, most dreadful mud, and the wagons—there isn't a vehicle in town that could be dignified with the name of carriage—go dragging through it at a rate that makes one wonder if they will ever get anywhere. And the people—oh, Zandy, I do wonder, sometimes, if they can really belong to the same race as the people of Oxley. I suppose they have souls—I know they have the human gift of speech. I just heard a passer-by—“the store-keeper,” by the way—call out to our next-door neighbor, who is the lawyer's wife, and is at this moment scrubbing her door-step—“Wal, Miss Slocumb, how's yer h'alth 's mornin'?”

“I'm right smart—look like it, don't I? I'm a' comin' daown your way bom-by.”

“Be ye? wal, all right; come ahead; guess I kin 'commodate yer. Got in some o' that ere sorghum 'lasses, ef yer want some on't naow.”

There is a school where we have to let the children go, because ma can't bear their noise all day; but the teacher is the dullest specimen of humanity, and I don't think they learn anything, except to be rude. I feel more troubled about them than I can tell; it is a dreadful place to bring up children, for they have nothing to do but concoct mischief. I do my best to counteract the bad influences, but I am afraid it is not much.

The church is a box a little larger than the other boxes, with graduated boxes for a steeple, and an immense painted rooster on the top as a finish. The minister is a good, kind man, but he has to eke out a living by hard work on a little patch of ground he hires, and has little time or heart for making sermons. He and his hard-working, kind-hearted, sensible wife, are the only people I ever care to see or talk to, though I have to be polite to all, or I should have trouble. Then the singing—what a shame it would be to call it *music*! You will laugh when I tell you that I am in the choir! I offered my services! and induced Mrs. Slocumb to lend her melodeon, and it is carried over to the church Saturday night and carried home Monday morning. I play and sing as loud as I can, for the double purpose of improving the singing and drowning it.

Ma has been miserable ever since we came here, and I must say I don't wonder. If I had nothing else to do, I think I should take sick

in self-defence. House-work and sewing are all there is to keep one from stagnating, and I am thankful every day for having so much of them on my hands. I have read every one of the few books we brought, over and over, until I know them all by heart, nobody has any to lend. The minister has Cruden's Concordance and Scott's Commentary, and I may be driven in my desperation to read them.

I dare say, Zandy, you will wonder what brought pa here, and I often wonder, myself, how he happened to light upon this place of all others. But the lands about here are very fertile—things grow almost without being planted, and pa formed a company for buying up lands and selling them, and thinks there is a great deal of money to be made out of it. It is to be hoped that everybody isn't of my mind, thinking that a quarter of an acre in a civilized country is better than a thousand acres here.

Now, Zandy, I have left the one pleasant, interesting item of my letter till the last. Who do you think was so good and kind as to seek us out, and come and see us? You never could guess, so I will tell you—our friend Mr. Forbes! You must know, there is no railroad within ten miles of us, but the stage—that is, an open lumber-wagon—goes to the nearest station one day, and comes back the next. It seldom brings anybody or anything except the mail, so you can imagine my amazement when one afternoon, about two weeks ago, it drove up to our door, and I saw a gentleman descend. It was a minute, at least, before I felt sure who it was; and when I did, instead of going to meet him and behaving myself properly, I stood on the steps crying and wringing my hands, and then when he came to me I fell to laughing, and it ended in a fit of hysterics. Wasn't it absurd, Zandy? I was ashamed enough, but I think Mr. Forbes understood it when he had been here a day or two, and saw how things were, and what an event his arrival was.

There was nothing to do to entertain him, and it was rather an unfair thing, as he afforded entertainment to the whole town. I was lonely enough when he was gone; everything seemed more forlorn than ever, in one way, though it was very nice to see some one from the happy world, and such a kind friend as Mr. Forbes, too.

Now I must say good-by, dear, begging you to continue to be good and write, even if you don't hear from me, though I know I shan't wait as long again. Ever and ever

Your loving friend,

CARRIE.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE FRIEND IN NEED.

THE weeks of the winter passed slowly, with a quiet routine of occupations that made all days alike.

Zandy was thoroughly interested in her studies, and music was, for a time, a great solace. Inspired by an enthusiastic and thorough master, she made rapid progress, and it would have compensated for many a deprivation. But as her aunt became more and more subject to nervous headaches, the music was gradually given up, until the piano was seldom opened.

Grace complained bitterly of her aunt's selfishness—not to Zandy, for she would not listen; but to herself, and in her letters to Mart Reynolds; though the truth was, she was glad to be rid of the trouble of practising. But she had a keen appreciation of the unloveliness of selfishness in others, as all selfish people have, and regarded her aunt almost with dislike.

One day early in March, Zandy's heart was rejoiced by the reception of a note from Mrs. Lowe, saying that she had come to Geneva for two or three days expressly to see Zandy, and begging her to come to her, as a severe cold would prevent her going out, for that day, at least.

Fairly bewildered by happiness, Zandy hastened to her aunt's room to tell the good news, and to ask that Pauline might go with her to see Mrs. Lowe. She was met at the door by Pauline, who begged her to be very quiet, as Mrs. Craighead was "suffering agonies," and must not be disturbed. This was a disappointment, but with her old impulsiveness, she mentally resolved what she would do before Pauline had finished her whispered warning, and was soon dressed for a walk.

Grace met her, as she was leaving her room.

"Where are you going, Zandy, all by yourself?" she asked.

"To see Mrs. Lowe, at the Hotel Des Bergues. I have just had a note from her asking me to come, and Pauline is busy taking care of Aunt Louisa."

"Dear me! what an excitement! the idea of seeing—wait a minute, and I'll go with you. I'd like to immensely."

"You never saw Mrs. Lowe," said Zandy, taking no pains to hide the annoyance she felt at Grace's proposal.

"Never mind," replied Grace; "it's a great deal better than for you to go alone. Just wait in the parlor for two seconds, and I'll be ready."

Grace flew to her room to dress, and Zandy had no choice but to wait for her, though she said to herself that she would almost rather not see Mrs. Lowe at all, than have Grace go.

"I am so glad of this little *divertissement*," said Grace, as they left the house together. "You don't know how horribly long this morning has seemed. How could you be so greedy as to think of leaving me at home, when you know I would face fire and water for a bit of variety?"

"I didn't think of you at all," replied Zandy, ungraciously; "I only thought of Mrs. Lowe, and of being in a hurry to get to her."

"The Hotel des Bergues is not far, and you'll see her soon," said Grace carelessly, and they walked on in silence; and Zandy forgot every annoyance in the happiness of seeing her friend.

When the first excitement of the meeting was over, and the glow had faded from Zandy's face, Mrs. Lowe was pained to see how much it had lost of the brightness and bloom of health and high spirits, that, at their first acquaintance, on the way to the Adirondacks, had reminded her constantly of dewy violets, and half-blown roses, and June mornings; and how the graceful, girlish vivacity had given place to a quiet, subdued manner. When she was not speaking or smiling, there was an expression of sadness about the sweet mouth and eyes that excited Mrs. Lowe's tenderest sympathy.

Mrs. Lowe talked brightly of her life in Rome, and of her son's delight and progress in his art, and of the endless charms of the great city; and then of home and of Geneva, and what the girls had seen and done. Zandy was very guarded, feeling jealously anxious that even so dear a friend as Mrs. Lowe should not learn how dull their life had been. But Grace had no such scruples. She had been a silent and uninterested listener to the rest of the conversation, but as soon as she saw that Mrs. Lowe was trying to draw the whole truth from Zandy, and that Zandy was maintaining her usual reserve, she launched out eloquently, giving plenty of details as to the dismalness of the past six months, utterly regardless of Zandy's disapproving looks, and of her occasional checks and contradictions.

Just as Zandy had said they must go, that her aunt would be troubled if she found they had gone out, Mrs. Lowe's friend, Mrs. Forsyth, came to the door, to say that she and Mr. Forsyth were going to drive, and to reiterate her regrets that Mrs. Lowe could not accompany them.

"I am sorry too," Mrs. Lowe replied. "But come in, and let me introduce Alexandra to you, you have heard me speak of her so often; and this is Miss Gellert—not quite a cousin, but very nearly one."

Mrs. Forsyth, a gracious, talkative old lady, greeted the girls warmly, and sat down to put on her gloves and wait for her husband.

"Are you just going, young ladies?" she asked, as Grace and Zandy had risen; "and did you walk? If you did, you must let me take you home; it will give me the greatest pleasure; is any one waiting for you that we can send on?"

"No, there is no one waiting for us," said Zandy, reluctantly. "We came alone."

"Did you really?" asked Mrs. Forsyth, looking from one pretty face to the other, as she paused in the process of buttoning a glove. "I don't believe in letting young girls go about by themselves in these dreadful European cities. I hope you are not in the habit of going out alone, my dears?"

"Indeed, we are not," cried Grace. "Aunt Louisa has as great a horror of it as you, Mrs. Forsyth. We are like Spanish girls, that never stir without a duenna; we never go out of the house without Pauline."

"It was my fault this time," said Zandy. "I was so anxious to see Mrs. Lowe, and Pauline could not leave my aunt."

"A maid isn't protection enough," said Mrs. Forsyth, shaking her head again; "you should have a courier, if you have no male relative with you."

"Oh, don't frighten them," cried Mrs. Lowe, laughing. "I am sure you make Europe out worse than it is."

"My dear! I couldn't. Why, you know what I was telling you this morning, the story my husband heard, of a man—a Frenchman—who has been dogging the steps of a pretty, young American girl, that has been spending the winter in Geneva—at least she is here now—and actually intends to run off with her, because she is rich and he wants her fortune. No wonder you look horrified, my dear; it is horrifying beyond expression, and I only tell you to show you the danger there is, and how circumspect you need to be. This bad, bold man makes it his boast that the young lady is in love with him, and is ready to elope with him whenever he says the word; and this young girl—innocent and foolish, I suppose, and maybe with no father or mother to watch over her—Oh, it is too distressing, upon my word!" cried Mrs. Forsyth, wiping two genuine tears from her bright eyes; "and if I knew the child's name, I would try to do something to save her. This Count—what is his name?—I

am sure I can't remember it five minutes together—has gambled away a large fortune of his own, it is said, and wants another to spend in the same way, I presume. You think I am very harsh, Miss Grace, I can see by the flash of your blue eyes; but when you have seen and heard as much as I have, you will—there's my husband," she said, as there came a knock at the door. "Come in, my dear; we are going to take these young ladies home—Miss Craighead and Miss Gellert, Mr. Forsyth. Are you ready?"

The girls bade Mrs. Lowe good-by until the next day, when she promised to see them. She could hardly have defined the feeling she had in regard to them. She had quietly watched their faces while Mrs. Forsyth was talking, and saw by their changing expressions that the subject had, in some way, a more than casual interest for them. Her uneasiness was quite vague, however, and she hoped to have it allayed before she left Geneva.

As they drove up to the door, a carriage was turning the first corner beyond, and Mrs. Forsyth, who happened to see it, exclaimed, holding up her hands, "That Count, as true as the world, my dears! He was pointed out to me this morning, and I never could fail to recognize him. He is decidedly distinguished-looking, there is no doubt of that, but *such* a villain! he might better be a Cyclops. Good-by, my dear young ladies. I shall make Mrs. Lowe bring me with her to-morrow, for I should feel very disconsolate to see no more of you than this."

Mr. Forsyth saw them safely within the house, and the girls went silently up stairs, each to her own room. At the end of an hour Zandy went to Grace's door, and her knock was answered by Pauline, who came out, saying, "Miss Grace is dressing." But Zandy went in, and walked to the bureau.

Grace eyed her with a decidedly ill-humoured expression on her pretty face, while she took down her fair hair, and began to brush it, evidently determined that Zandy should break the silence, which she did presently.

"Of course now, Grace, you will give up your flirtation with that man."

"What man?" asked Grace, shortly.

"What man?" repeated Zandy, lifting her eyes; "is there more than one?—I mean '*the Count*.'"

Grace said nothing, but plied her brush with impatient strokes. Zandy was silent too, for a minute, and when she spoke again, it was rather hesitatingly, and very gently.

"I feel as badly about it as you can, Grace. It is perfectly dreadful; but it is one advantage of our having been so secluded, that nobody knows us, and no one can point you out as

the American girl that the Count talks about. Oh, what a shame! what a burning shame it is for a man to behave so! there is no punishment half bad enough for him. The idea of his *daring* to say you were in love with him, and ready to elope with him; and of his presuming to think he could marry you at all. I couldn't have believed that anybody, that looked like a gentleman, would be so dishonorable."

Grace had kept on plying her impatient strokes, her lips tightly pressed together, and her eyes full of resentment, signs which Zandy entirely misinterpreted. Now she threw down her brush, and turning angrily upon Zandy, exclaimed, "You shall not talk so—I won't bear it. Must everything be true that a gossiping old woman tells you? I don't believe a word of it."

"A word of what?" demanded Zandy, indignant at Grace's manner of speaking of Mrs. Forsyth, and amazed at her tone altogether; "that Count Duvernois—I can't imagine how you learned his name—follows you, and smiles and bows, and drops flowers at your feet? is that what you don't believe?"

A flush passed over Grace's face, and the suggestion of a smile played about her lips for an instant, but she answered in the same incensed tone:

"I don't believe a word of all that gossip about his having gambled away one fortune, and needing another, and getting it by marriage. He is very rich, and thinks I am poor—the peniless ward of a stern uncle."

"How do you know he thinks so?" asked Zandy quickly. "Have you ever—I didn't know"—she stopped and looked in perplexed astonishment at Grace, who replied defiantly, though with secret uneasiness:

"You are not supposed to know everything." After a little pause, she began with eager animation, as a new thought occurred to her—and indeed she was only sorry that it had not occurred before—"Why should you take it for granted that Mrs. Forsyth meant Count Duvernois? She didn't mention any name, and it isn't likely he is the only French count in Geneva—or that I am the only pretty American girl," she added, seeing the brightening of Zandy's face at the welcome suggestion. "One would think you thought so. Why, you know, Zandy, if I believed a bit of the story, I should be as indignant as you are; but I don't,—*of course* I don't, believe that it is my Count whom Mrs. Forsyth has heard about; and if she had heard it all forty times over, I shouldn't believe it any more; he is a perfect gentleman, and never could talk about *any* lady so—the very idea of his being such a monster!"

"I do really suppose," said Zandy, with a touch of scorn in her tones, "that a man might have big black eyes and make a graceful bow, and yet not be a gentleman; and I don't think it speaks well at all for *your Count*, as you call him, that he has flirted with you."

"What nonsense!" cried Grace. "One would think it was a crying sin for a girl to look at a man, except in the bosom of her family, with half a dozen pairs of dragons' eyes upon her. If all the world had as strict notions of things as you have, I shouldn't care how soon I went to heaven."

"I am thankful for any notions that keep me from doing unlady-like things," replied Zandy. "If I had no other reason, I would try to behave properly here, so as not to disgrace my country-women."

"I suppose you think I ought to have been left at home," said Grace, turning her head from side to side, to see the effect of her arrangement of the curls.

"I don't think your behavior these last three months would do you much credit," replied Zandy, "but fortunately only two or three people know of it, besides myself, and if you stop flirting now—there will be no great harm done."

"You were cut out for an old maid, Zandy Craighead, and are no judge of what it is proper for girls to do!" cried Grace.

"So I have heard you say before," replied Zandy, coolly, and she left the room, feeling rather sorry that the talk which she had meant should be friendly and helpful to Grace, had ended so disagreeably.

The fears aroused by Mrs. Forsyth's story, had vanished, Zandy had so fully accepted the suggestion that it was another count of whom the story was told, and she felt sure that Grace would be frightened out of carrying her flirtation any farther by what they had heard, so that she was really more at ease than she had been for a long time.

To all the outward monotony of the winter there had been an under-current of excitement for Grace, and restless watchfulness for Zandy, growing out of the persistent attentions of "the Count," and Grace's persistent encouragement of them. It was impossible for Grace to keep her affairs entirely to herself; and so she had made the best she could of a disagreeable necessity, by not troubling herself about Zandy's disapproval, which was never expressed in words, only by cold, scornful, or indignant looks.

If Zandy had dreamed that Pauline, whom her aunt believed in so implicitly, considering her sufficiently trustworthy to be the escort of her nieces, was in Grace's confidence—had been

won over by flatteries and presents, and was the bearer of many a note and bouquet, she would have been horrified into interfering to prevent such proceedings. But she never conceived that Grace would do anything worse than she saw her do—in church droop her lashes and blush when the Count took his place near them and fixed his “splendid dark eyes” upon her, and lift them shyly and smile now and then; and in the street encourage his passing them again and again in their walks, by her conscious looks. All this was bad enough in Zandy’s eyes, and she felt that she shared the disgrace by being privy to it; but she tried to satisfy her conscience by assuring herself that she was not responsible for Grace’s behavior, and by letting her see that she disapproved.

She saw no more of Grace until tea, when she was demure and silent, and very pale, as Zandy noticed. Zandy was with her aunt during the early part of the evening, and when she returned to the parlor Grace had left it. But Zandy heard her moving about in her own room, long after she herself had gone to bed.

The ladies called the next day, but Mrs. Craighead was unable to see them.

Mrs. Lowe made an opportunity to say to Zandy.

“My dear, you know I came to Geneva expressly to see you, and that should be sufficient proof of my affection for you, to lead you to confide in me any trouble or anxiety you may have. If I can help you in any way, I shall be only too glad. Will you promise to tell me if you think I can?”

“Yes, indeed!” was all Zandy could say, for tears were in her eyes, and she could hardly restrain the impulse to throw her arms about her kind friend’s neck and unburden her tired heart.

Grace was more than usually listless over her lessons that day, and left the parlor soon after tea. Mrs. Craighead did not leave her room, and Pauline went about in noiseless slippers, and with a most melancholy face. Clouds, and towards night a dull, cold rain, completed the sombre aspect of things. The parlor never had seemed so desolate to Zandy. She looked about, as she sat down by the table, with an actual shiver, and took up a new book, hoping to find it interesting; but whatever it might have proved at another time, now it failed to fix her attention, and she soon closed it. Leaning back in her chair, she shut her eyes and tried to think of pleasant things, but started up in a minute or two—the silence was so oppressive she could not bear it.

She knew her presence would not be welcomed to Grace, and she

had no desire for her society; but anything seemed better than that dismal solitude, and so she went to Grace’s door and knocked. There was no answer, and she knocked again, louder than before. Still there was no answer, and with a terrible sinking of heart, she opened the door a little and listened—no light, and no sound.

“Grace,” she said softly, “are you here?” and as no answer came from the darkness, she cried, resisting the conviction that pressed upon her, “Grace, why don’t you speak? I only want to know if you are here.”

She listened again, holding her hand upon her heart to quiet its loud throbs, but there was no answer, and no sound from within, except the sighing of the wind and the beating of the rain against the windows. Groping her way to the bed, she found it smooth—no one was in it or had been.

“What can it mean?” she whispered.—“Can she be in Aunt Louisa’s room? she may possibly have gone there since I came out.”

With hurried, trembling steps she went to her aunt’s door, and opened it very softly, enough to see that the night-lamp was burning, and that even Pauline was not there. Mrs. Craighead was not asleep, and said, “What is it, Zandy?”

“Nothing, aunty, only—I thought—are you quite comfortable?”

“Yes, I think I shall sleep. Pauline didn’t come. I rang for her two or three times, and I am afraid she is ill; she said she didn’t feel well this morning, and you had better see how she is before you go to bed.”

Without stopping to answer, Zandy hastened to Pauline’s door with a new, though vague dread. She opened it, and looked in, but no Pauline was there—only silence and disorder; a candle flared and flickered in the sudden draught, and went out, leaving her in darkness.

If Zandy had been less buoyant and courageous, or had less physical vitality, she would have been overcome by her startling discoveries, and have cried out or fainted. But as soon as the vague terrors that had seized her, when she first found Grace’s room so dark and still, had begun to take definite shape, her courage began to return, and by the time she had lighted a candle and was again in Grace’s room, she felt equal to anything.

The first definite intention that came out of the confusion of fears and conjectures was to keep everything from her aunt, and to let no one in the house know that anything had happened, if she could possibly help it. The first thing she did, was to look

about, not without a keen thrill of dread, to see what was there and what was not.

The general air of the room was as if its owner had dressed for a party in haste, and had left everything in disorder, and Zandy thought, "She has gone to some entertainment—that is bad enough, but not so bad as I"—

Her eyes fell at the moment on an empty space, where one of Grace's trunks had been, and her heart fairly stood still. As soon as she had recovered from the shock, she went to the closet—all Grace's black dresses hung against the wall, and two or three black hats were thrown carelessly on the shelf. Then Zandy remembered that the large French trunk which was missing had contained the dresses Grace brought from Paris, and had not worn since Helen's death. The upper bureau-drawer was partly open, and Zandy looked in. It was nearly empty, but a bouquet was there, withered and faded, and near it was a note, addressed to herself; when she opened it with trembling fingers, she found one enclosed, addressed to "Mademoiselle Gellert." She laid the latter down, while she eagerly read, in Grace's hand:

DEAR ZANDY:—When you see this I shall be married to my dear Count Duvernois. I love him and he loves me, and I shall be rich, and a Countess, and live in Paris, and be happy, and I hope no one will be troubled about me. I am sorry to take Pauline away from Aunt Louisa, but she wishes to go; she dislikes Geneva as much as I do, and I don't believe it will be hard for you to find some one to fill her place, and I couldn't go alone, you know. Give my love to Aunt Louisa, and ask her to forgive me. If I had been less unhappy, I might have waited till the Count could marry me openly, but you know he never could have visited me here, and he loves me too much to live without me, only seeing me by stealth, as you will see by his letter. I leave it for you to read, so that you can judge what a true, warm heart he has, and how little he cares for my fortune. Good-by. In half an hour I shall be gone.

GRACE.

Zandy trembled so that she could hardly hold the other note, which was in French, and she read it with a white face, and with parted lips:

MY BEAUTIFUL—MY ADORED:—The supreme moment has come when I may claim your sweet promise to fly with me, and make me forever happy. I am summoned to my estates in France; I must not delay, but I cannot leave the star of my heart, the light of my life,

behind! and has she not given her word that she would go with me where we may bask in the sunshine of love without fear?

To-morrow night, then—start not, my beloved—I shall watch for the signal-light in your lattice, and be at the appointed place to receive you. Let the faithful Pauline be ready to open the door for my servants.

Then at Notre Dame before the high altar, as you wished, shall our happy nuptials be solemnized, and I will bear my peerless bride, first to my chateau, and then to our beloved Paris, and she shall never know an unfulfilled wish, or a grief that love can disarm.

Adieu, my sweet American lily, till the blissful hour when we meet to part no more. Forever thine,
HENRI.

Zandy was horrified; there was not a particle of color in her cheek or lip, as she put the letters into her pocket, but she was not stunned or bewildered. Every impulse and energy was bent upon saving Grace, and to reach the church of Notre Dame seemed all that was needful. It never once occurred to her that it might be too late, and she flew to her own room.

With her waterproof on, and her hat in her hand, she paused suddenly, as the thought of Mrs. Lowe came to her mind, and of her parting charge that morning. A moment's considering resulted in her writing a few words on a card, putting it in an envelope, and then going to the parlor, and ringing the bell for a servant. When he appeared, with as calm a manner as she could assume, she requested him to take the note at once to Hotel des Bergues, and deliver it himself to the lady to whom it was addressed, and wait for an answer.

"But don't be gone a moment longer than is necessary," she said imperatively, as a sudden sense of what it would be to wait for his return came upon her.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THEN AND AFTER.

ZANDY was too restless to sit down while she waited for the return of the messenger. She walked about the room, looked out into the wet street, starting at the sound of carts or carriages rattling by; listened at her aunt's door to assure herself that all was still; looked at her watch again and again, hardly able to believe the evidence of its steady ticking that it had not stopped, so like hours did the minutes seem; and at last, when Mrs. Lowe's reply was placed in her hand, she could have cried for joy.

Zandy put on her cloak and hat, so as to have no delay when Mrs. Lowe came, but as she seated herself near the door leading into the hall, a sudden revulsion of feeling made her pull off the glove that was half on, and sit motionless, gazing at the light.

"How foolish I am," she thought; "why am I making such a time about her? If I prevent her marrying that man she will only hate me the more—not that I care if she does, but why should I try to bring her back, when it would be so lovely to have her gone?—and I am sure *anybody* is good enough for her. I do wish I had just let it all be, and not sent for Mrs. Lowe. One would think I liked her, and really cared what became of her, when she has made me more wretched than anything and everything else in the world, and I cannot abide her; she is selfish, and vain, and heartless, and untruthful, and has taken away my friends, and done all she possibly could to make me miserable. I wonder if it isn't too late to do anything?—if it—Oh what if it *should* be!" She flew to the window and listened, and looked anxiously up and down the street, while she thought, "What a monster I am! I wish Mrs. Lowe would come, it seems an age—there's the carriage!" and Zandy hurried to the hall, and met Mrs. Lowe and Mr. Forsyth at the head of the stairs, as they came up. She would have had them turn about and go back to the carriage without an explanation. But Mr. Forsyth said: "What is it? tell us what has happened, my dear young lady;" and Mrs. Lowe took Zandy's hand and led her into the parlor, and shut the door.

"Now tell us, dear, as briefly as you like, what your trouble is, and what you would have us do," she said.

"Grace has gone—it must have been Grace that Mrs. Forsyth heard about. I want you to go with me to the church—Notre Dame—and save her, and there isn't a minute to lose. They may be there now."

"But what do you know, Miss Craighead?" asked Mr. Forsyth. "Tell us what clew you have to their movements, and then we can judge what is best to be done."

"There is only one thing to be done," said Zandy, impatient of any delay, and she went on hurriedly: "Grace's note to me said that she was to be married to the Count to-night, and the Count's note to Grace said it was to be—I don't know at what hour, but to-night, at Notre Dame; and it will be too late if we wait," she added, going to the door, and looking beseechingly at Mrs. Lowe, who at once followed her.

"Why don't you come, Mr. Forsyth?" exclaimed Zandy, her face flushing with annoyance at seeing Mr. Forsyth still standing in a meditative attitude.

"I was thinking," he said, "that it would be better to go to the Consul's first and get instructions. I am afraid we can effect nothing by ourselves."

"We can—we must; there isn't time to go anywhere," cried Zandy, and she led the way down stairs. "Drive to Notre Dame as fast as you can," she said to the driver, as she got into the carriage.

"I think we had much better go to the Consul's first," said Mr. Forsyth, shutting the carriage-door after them; "but you ladies will always have your own way."

Zandy thought the horses crept, though it was really but a very little time before they stopped at the church door. At a little distance stood a large close carriage, with a man pacing back and forth beside it in the rain. Mrs. Lowe and Mr. Forsyth were beside her by the time she had pushed open the church door, and in another moment, the three were standing in the aisle, their anxious eyes peering into the scene before them.

The church was in darkness, except for the dim light of the altar-candles, but they disclosed Grace and the Count kneeling before the altar, Grace arrayed in white, but with no veil or flowers on her fair head. Near by stood two men, and a little in the background Pauline knelt, her face covered with her hands, and Zandy was sure she heard smothered sobs. The priest stood within the chancel, and as Zandy's eyes became accustomed to the dim light, and she had understood as much as they could tell her, her ears caught the words: "that she who shall

wear it, keeping inviolable fidelity to her spouse, may ever remain"—the rest was lost to her, and she stood, watching with dilated eyes, while the priest sprinkled the ring with holy-water, and drew near to hand it to the Count.

Then, as if moved by some influence outside of herself, she started forward, crying in clear, ringing tones, "Stop! don't let him put it on! she must not marry him."

Mr. Forsyth was electrified; Mrs. Lowe would have checked her, feeling that it was a man's place to forbid the banns. But Zandy would not be deterred, and her friends followed her up the aisle to the altar.

The bride and bridegroom had started to their feet at the sound of Zandy's voice; the priest held the ring extended while he looked in wonder at the new-comers, and all stood as if spell-bound by enchantment.

The Count was the first to recover himself, and turning to the priest, said in a low tone, "That girl has no authority to prevent the marriage, holy father;—give me the ring, and let the ceremony proceed."

But the priest shook his head, and kept his eyes fixed upon Zandy, who went up the steps, and with her hand resting on the chancel railing, said, "They are not married yet, are they?"

The priest replied in the negative.

"They must not be—we know nothing of this man—he can't be worthy, or he would not have done this. Grace!" she cried, hurrying to Grace's side, and grasping her unwilling hand; "you don't know what you are doing! it is horrible! you will kill Aunt Louisa—think of her, think of Uncle William, of Helen—O, Grace, think of God, and don't be so rash. My poor Grace, I know it has been desolate, but it shan't be so for you any longer—only come back to us! don't marry this bad man. Listen! look at me, Grace—not at him."

Grace replied to Zandy's earnest appeal by snatching her hand from her grasp, and yielding it to that of the Count, who had eyed Zandy with angry impatience while she spoke, and now turned to Grace with a smile of relief and triumph.

"You see, father," he said, addressing the priest, "that I am not forcing an unwilling bride. Will you not proceed?"

Again the priest shook his head, and now Mr. Forsyth, who, truth to tell, had felt rather glad that Zandy chose to take the active part, drew near.

"It cannot be in accordance with the rules of your Church, Reverend Sir," he said, "to perform this solemn ceremony for a lady who is under age, when her friends are in ignorance of

her intentions, and would be grieved and shocked beyond measure at such a clandestine marriage. I am sure, though this lady"—Mrs. Lowe stood beside him—"and myself are not related to this misguided girl, we have a right, in the name of her aunt and uncle, her lawful guardians, to forbid these unwise banns, and take her under our protection."

The priest bowed a ready assent.

"I would only venture further to say, Reverend Sir," Mr. Forsyth added, "by way of excuse for our interference, that I think, if you make inquiries, you will find that the gentleman bridegroom, who has, I presume, given you his name as Duvernois, is it not so?"—the father bowed—"has gone also by the name of Lamois, whatever motive he may have for the alias."

The gallant Count turned visibly pale, partly from rage and partly from fear, and only by a great effort assumed an air of courage and gentlemanly composure.

"I shall hereafter make it plain to you, holy father," he said, addressing the priest, "that this man has greatly misrepresented me; that he has mistaken the person, I am bound to believe, as no gentleman would willingly vilify another; and I will yet have my bride."

He kissed the little hands that clung to him, hardly glancing at the tearful face, and hastily left the church, followed by his friends.

Grace would have followed him, too; she uttered a wild cry when he turned from her, and started forward with outstretched arms; but Zandy threw her arms about her, and when Grace impatiently disengaged herself, Mrs. Lowe came to soothe and reason with her, and to use authority, if need be. The scene was a strange and confused one: Grace fell to weeping wildly and lamenting for her lost Henri, uttering bitter words against Zandy; Pauline sobbed and wrung her hands, filled with terror of the punishment that might await her; the priest was fluent of excuses to Mr. Forsyth for his unwitting part in the unfortunate affair, and Zandy's over-wrought nerves had to find a little relief in tears.

Mrs. Lowe was the friend in need, whose gentle firmness and efficiency brought quiet out of the confusion. She took the girls and Pauline home, and remained with them during that dismal night, as there was great necessity that she should, Grace being hysterical, and Pauline quite helpless.

Fortunately, Mrs. Craighead needed no attendance, but slept on, unconscious of the excited state of her little household.

The next morning Zandy was able to meet her aunt without betraying anything more in her face and manner than could be

accounted for by a wakeful night, and it was not difficult to satisfy her in regard to Pauline's non-appearance. For once Zandy was thankful for the weakness that kept her aunt safely in her own room, and for the self-absorption that prevented her asking many questions.

Grace kept her bed during that day, maintaining a sullen silence most of the time, but occasionally breaking into hysterical cries. Zandy felt genuine pity for her, at first, and tried her best to win her confidence; but finding Grace's resentment unyielding, she gave up her efforts, and waited upon her in silence, with an air of cold indifference.

She went through the day like one in a dream, only half crediting the reality of the scenes that were so constantly before her mind. Even Mrs. Lowe's presence seemed a little like an illusion, as Mrs. Lowe could see, by the sudden, wistful looks she gave her, and her evident dread of being out of her sight a moment.

For two or three days there were constant demands upon Zandy's time and patience, and but for Mrs. Lowe's encouragement, the demand might have proved too much of a tax upon her strength, after the excitements of the week. But there came a day when Pauline was able to resume her duties, and when Mrs. Craighead appeared at dinner, and stayed in the parlor some time after, evidently cheered by the genial society of Mrs. Lowe. Grace's pale face and want of appetite troubled her aunt, and Mrs. Lowe secretly resolved to make them the text of a plan she had in mind, when the time came for broaching it.

Zandy was much oppressed by the sober fact of having a great secret from her aunt, but it was a satisfaction to feel that she was kept in countenance by Mrs. Lowe in her silence as to all that had happened.

Zandy spent the next day at the Hotel des Bergues, and a lovely drive, a walk, lively chats with Mrs. Forsyth, and quiet talks with Mrs. Lowe, filled it with enjoyment. Late in the afternoon, as she sat beside Mrs. Lowe at the window, watching the shifting shadows on the lake and mountains, Mrs. Lowe said:

"What a sweet chance—I mean by that, what a kind providence—it was, that brought us together on our way to the Adirondacks."

"Yes, indeed," exclaimed Zandy, fervently; "it was lovely, then, and what should I have done without you here, these last dreadful days? If you were only going to stay as long as we do!—how can I let you go?—what shall I do when you are gone?"

"I have thought about it a great deal, dear child," Mrs. Lowe replied, drawing Zandy affectionately within her arms; "I feel very unwilling to leave you, but there seems no help for it, for my boy needs me by this time. There are two or three convictions and conclusions at which I have arrived that seem wise ones to me, and that I hope you will approve, my dear, and your aunt, too—of course, everything depends upon her approval of my plan for Grace, and"—

"Plan for Grace?" cried Zandy, eagerly; "what is it?"

"To take her to Rome with me, dear. Mrs. Forsyth and I think it will be the best thing to do, if your aunt will trust her to our care. What do you think about it?"

"I should think it would be lovely for Grace," answered Zandy, yielding to the impulse of a jealous pang. "I am sure she will be delighted to go."

"But how will you feel about being left?" asked Mrs. Lowe, understanding and entering into Zandy's feeling.

"Oh, I shan't mind it; I shall have my studies,"—a quivering lip and unsteady voice gave the warning to Zandy's pride, and she stopped.

"Very poor comfort they will be," replied Mrs. Lowe. "I think it would be lovely for you to go, too, and I feel very loth to leave you behind.—Suppose I ask your aunt if she cannot spare you both for a little while?"

"No—she cannot spare *me*; I must not think of it—though I should like to go so very much. But Grace needn't stay; there is no reason why she should lose the pleasure of going with you."

"I see very plainly how dependent your aunt is upon you, dear child, and I must not urge you to do what your heart forbids. As to Grace—if you think you would miss her, and be more lonely without her, I shall not mention the plan to her or your aunt, but just leave her with you."

"I shouldn't miss her in the least," exclaimed Zandy, disarmed of every feeling but a sense of Mrs. Lowe's kindness, and of eagerness to be rid of Grace. "It is lovely of you to plan for us so much, and as long as I can't go, if you will only take Grace, I shall be happy. There is no telling how soon she would find another Count to flirt with, and I should be in a worry about her and Pauline all the time. Pauline is so humble and penitent that I dare say she will behave very well, if she hasn't Grace to put her up to mischief again."

"Poor Grace!" said Mrs. Lowe, gently stroking Zandy's hair as she spoke, "I know enough of her little life to feel very sorry for her;—it is so hard, even for those of us who have

been girt about with good influences and kindly circumstances from our babyhood up, to do right, and live worthily. I long to help her."

"If she could behave as she has so soon after Helen's death, I don't believe she will ever be different," said Zandy, and in the severity of her judgment the affair with the Count was not uppermost.

"The faults of early education are not easily eradicated, my dear, and we must try to judge as God judges, or rather, not at all. But we have only settled one point," Mrs. Lowe added, brightly—"Grace's going with me; and now we come to the next, which is: What is to be done for you?"

"For me?" repeated Zandy, in surprise; "why, I am to stay here with Aunt Louisa, and attend to her and learn my lessons."

"I am afraid I might be justly charged with meddling in other people's affairs," said Mrs. Lowe, after a moment's hesitation; "but I cannot help feeling that this is an exceptional case, and demands a little meddling. Some time I shall make my confession to your aunt, and trust to obtain her pardon. But now, what I want to say to you, dear, is, that I think you are pursuing a mistaken course in keeping everything from your friends at home."—Zandy started, and looked anxiously into Mrs. Lowe's face.—"You have been brave and patient," Mrs. Lowe went on, "and have not complained"—

"Yes, I have, to myself, bitterly," said Zandy.

"But not in your letters, even to me."

"No, indeed! I knew Aunt Louisa had a great dread of my letting anybody know that she was ill, and that I wasn't happy, and I wouldn't have done it if it had been a thousand times worse than it was—my part of it, I mean."

"You have proved yourself very unselfish; but suppose you knew that your aunt's health was being permanently endangered—that the very saddest consequences might result from her present mode of life—would you not feel that it was a duty to let your uncle and grandparents know the truth? Have they any idea of her state of health?"

"No, I am sure they have not," replied Zandy.

"I gathered so from—well, various things; the mere fact of your being here so long, under the circumstances, would have been sufficient to make me suspect it. But I do advise you now, my dear child, to take the responsibility upon yourself, if your aunt still objects, and write to your grandparents or your Uncle William, or even to your uncle in England, and give them an intimation, at least, of the real state of things."

"I can't, I can't!" cried Zandy; "Aunt Louisa never would forgive me if I were the means of her being obliged to leave Geneva. It would break her heart. I dare not take the responsibility."

"Then will you let me do it?—You see, Alexandra, I regard your welfare as well as your aunt's, and I cannot think calmly of leaving you here to take care of your aunt, and with no one to take care of you. If the doctor were what he ought to be, he would have written himself, before now."

"I am sure I don't know what I ought to do," said Zandy, sadly. "Aunt Louisa often refers to Uncle William's coming as if she dreaded it, because he might insist on her going home with him."

"When do you think he will come?" asked Mrs. Lowe.

"In May, surely," Zandy answered, and she added after a pause, "I have a selfish reason for dreading to do anything that would bring him sooner. I know that Aunt Louisa would be sure to think I did it for my own sake, because I was tired of being with her, and wanted to go home; and I *can't* have her think so."

"I cannot wonder at your feeling as you do," Mrs. Lowe said, kindly, "and I shall not say a word more about it: two months cannot be of vital importance to your aunt's health."

Within the next week the plan for Grace was discussed and decided upon. Mrs. Craighead's only objection to Grace's going to Rome was the idea of burdening Mrs. Lowe with the care of her, but Mrs. Lowe readily overcame that; and without knowing how much reason there was for feeling anxious about Grace, her aunt was conscious of a sense of relief.

Grace maintained a listless, subdued air to the last, and submitted passively; but in her heart she was overjoyed at the prospect of being released from the "durance vile" of her life in Geneva, deprived of the excitement of the Count's attentions. Mrs. Forsyth, whose perceptions of character were not very keen, looked upon her as an innocent, simple-hearted victim of the wiles of a scheming Count, and was impatient to show Rome to her and her to Rome, as her lovely young *protégé*. Grace had her own ideas as to whose matronizing she should choose, if she had a choice.

The Count and his friends were seen no more in Geneva after the night of the interrupted marriage, and various reports reached Mr. Forsyth as to his character and identity; but it was some time before the whole truth was known, viz.: that he was no count at all—that he had happened, in Paris, to be in the way of knowing about Grace and her prospective fortune, and

had gone to Geneva with the intention of marrying her, if the inquiries made by his emissaries made it certain that the fortune was within his reach. He was greatly in need of money to pay debts and carry on fresh operations, and knew of no easier way of obtaining it than marrying an heiress; and Grace's inborn vanity and coquetry made her an easy prey to the wiles of the handsome adventurer.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

DARKEST BEFORE THE DAWN.

THE departure of Mrs. Lowe and the Forsyths and Grace from Geneva left Zandy very heavy-hearted. At first she repented that she had not gone with them, and was indignant at having been allowed to make such a sacrifice, and every thought of Grace caused a bitter pang; and then she grew ashamed of her selfishness, repented of her repentance, and tried to atone by renewed devotion to her aunt. But she could not at once cast off the weight of loneliness and home-sickness, and with her heart so heavy she could not make her eyes bright or her manner cheerful; and once or twice, when she was doing her best, that is, talking with her aunt of the latest letters, or other of the few things that interested her, and performing little services in which Pauline failed to please the invalid's exacting tastes, she was sent away because she looked so unhappy: "Don't stay, child," her aunt would say in fretful tones: "it is too dreary for you here; let Pauline do these things, and go and try to amuse yourself," and Zandy, too hurt and discouraged to remonstrate, would go sadly away.

There was nothing to amuse her; her companions were sad thoughts and her books, and her only comfort was the dubious one of letters from home.

So April passed, and she began to look anxiously for news that her Uncle William had sailed.

One Sunday morning she went to her aunt's room with the intention of spending the morning there, and letting Pauline go to church. Her aunt said in a melancholy voice, "You are going to church, are you not, Zandy?"

"Why no, Aunt Louisa, I thought I would stay with you," Zandy replied.

"I would rather have you go, child; it will be a little change for you. You had better go now and get ready. I can spare Pauline quite well."

Zandy started for church, feeling very heavy-hearted; for besides her usual trials, a letter had come from Dick, the day before, telling in a careless tone, of debts and low standing in college, and giving her sad intimations, in bravado style, of

associations and influences that filled her with dread. But the bright beauty of the morning had a cheering effect, and when she was seated in church she grew hopeful, and almost felt as if the sermon were for her especially.

The preacher was a stranger—an aged, white-haired man, whose years had taught him many lessons and fitted him to teach and guide others. His tremulous voice was tender as a father's pleading with his children; he evidently longed to win every soul present to a perfect understanding with the God whom he had found so close a friend, so present a helper. He dwelt, simply and earnestly, upon the fact that it is not only in the great trials and triumphs of life that God is with his children, but in its everyday joys, its humblest duties and least temptations; and he showed how Christ was made perfect as a Saviour for us, by being tempted and tried as we are—how that should encourage each to come with his troubles and longings, never doubting his readiness to bestow sympathy and help. He warned the tempted and erring against doubt and discouragement.

Zandy listened for herself and for Dick, and found help for herself and hope for him; and when the solemn tones had invoked the blessing at the end of the service, she turned to leave her place with a heart more at rest than it had been for many a day. She walked down the aisle thinking that now she could write the letter she had planned to Dick, and that she could believe that he would be delivered from the temptations that were besetting him; and so busy was she with her thoughts, that not until she reached the door, and was close beside him, did she see Mr. Lowe, who was waiting for her there.

Zandy gave him her hand, but was speechless with surprise; and the surprise was so pleasant that, coming just then, it was almost more than she could take calmly. Perhaps Mr. Lowe appreciated what an unexpected pleasure might be to her; at any rate, he did not insist upon her speaking, when he saw her cheeks flush and her lips tremble a little, but led her down the steps; and in a minute or two Zandy had recovered herself, and turning eagerly to him, said, "When did you come? I can hardly believe it is really true that you *have* come; how glad I am to see you!"

"Then you are glad," Mr. Lowe replied with a smile, "and you know who I am—you did not need an introduction?"

"The very idea!" Zandy exclaimed. "I think I was never more astonished in my life than when I first saw you, or more glad; I thought I must be dreaming. But you didn't tell me when you came;—you can't have been long in Geneva without coming to see me?"

"No, indeed! I arrived last night from Paris, quite too late to pay a visit; and this morning I could hardly resist the temptation to call before church, and walk to church with you, if you were going; I went to the Cathedral, hoping to find you there; and when I discovered you several seats in front of me, I was strongly disposed to crowd past the people who sat in the pew with you, and seat myself beside you."

"If you had," said Zandy, "there would have been a scene! I should surely have exclaimed, and made a disturbance."

"I contented myself with looking at what I could see of you by dodging this way and that, and counting the minutes till the service was ended; and I began to think it never would end."

"What a lovely old man it was that preached," said Zandy. "But do tell me, is your mother in Rome still, or did she go to Paris with you? and the Forsyths? have you left Rome for good? and where is Grace?"

Miss Gellert is in Rome; my mother is there; the Forsyths are there; I have left Rome for the present, that is, until next winter; and I am going back to Paris."

"When?" asked Zandy, lifting her eyes to his face, and waiting anxiously for his answer.

Mr. Lowe hesitated an instant, with his eyes resting on the sweet, questioning face, and then said, "To-morrow—or the next day, at the latest; I ought to go to-morrow."

"Oh, so soon?" Zandy exclaimed. "Why *do* you stay such a little while? Nobody stays in Geneva; all my friends go to Paris or Rome, and I have no good of them. It is too bad."

"You cannot think it half as bad as I do," Mr. Lowe said, touched more than he would have cared to own by the child-like lament; "I ought not to have come at all; but I did, and I wish I could stay as long as you do."

"I wish you could," said Zandy heartily; "it would make the time seem so much shorter and pleasanter till Uncle William comes. You know Aunt Louisa is so ill, she doesn't care to see much of me," she added by way of explanation, "and I get rather lonely. You have not told me why you left your mother in Rome, and why you are going to Paris. I thought you were to stay in Rome until summer, and then travel with your mother."

"I thought so, too; but a pleasant little circumstance changed our—or my, plans somewhat. Shall I tell you what it was?—will you be interested in a piece of egotism?"

"Yes, indeed!" replied Zandy heartily; "it will be like having something new and pleasant happen to me, to hear of something pleasant that has happened to a friend. But here we

are at home. You must come in and stay to dinner, and then I can hear all about that and other things."

"It may seem an insignificant matter to you," Mr. Lowe said, when Zandy had seen her aunt, and had come back to him in the parlor; "but to me, just afloat with my pallet and brushes, it was as momentous as it was surprising, that anybody should ask me to paint portraits of himself and his wife and one of his children. But it really happened that an old friend of my mother's, moved by regard for her, and a benevolent desire to encourage a beginner and a young fellow-countryman, sent for me to come to Paris and perform that service. I was obliged to begin the work at once, as the family are to return home in a few weeks, and want to take the portraits with them, and my mother decided to remain in Rome a little longer. I took a leave of absence of a few days, and came here, as you see."

"It is lovely that you came, and I am glad you have the portraits to paint. I hope they are nice-looking people; I should think an artist would never like to paint any but beautiful faces."

"The father and mother have sensible benevolent faces. The son, a boy of sixteen, has one that will tax my inexperienced hand. It is commonplace, with no special individuality, when in repose, as faces always are when arranged for an artist's benefit. But it is capable of more wonderful changes than any other face I ever saw. The boy is a character; he is sadly deformed, and, as often happens in such cases, his intellect is developed out of all proportion to his age and physical strength. He has very strong feelings, too, and his face can light up with tenderness and his eyes soften like a woman's. Unfortunately, it is oftener distorted and ablaze with rage; his having suffered so much, and having been debarred so entirely from boyish sports, has led to his being indulged to a sad degree. I do suppose he never has been crossed in a whim, or had the idea of self-control—of curbing his fierce temper, or resisting an impulse, whatever its nature or probable consequences—suggested to him;—I say never, but I should say, never until lately, for a new influence has come into his life that has worked wonders. But you can imagine how difficult it must be to do justice to such a subject."

"I should think you would have to paint his face as it is ordinarily, and then catch a good expression and put it in," said Zandy. Tell me more about him—what is the new influence that has done so much for him?"

"The tutor he and his brothers have had for the last few months has seemed to have a magical power over him; and by

the way, his name is Hollister; and that was the name of the tutor you and your brother and cousins had for two or three years; wasn't it?"

"Yes—his name was Hollister," Zandy replied.

"Of course it is the same one! how stupid it was of me not to remember it, when I saw him in Paris."

"It may not be—what is the family's name?" asked Zandy.

"Leighton—the Leightons,—of Philadelphia," Mr. Lowe answered.

"It must be the same Mr. Hollister, then, for he went to Paris to teach a Mr. Leighton's sons," Zandy said.

"Then you will be doubly interested to hear about him," said Mr. Lowe; "though," he added, "perhaps you know more already than I can tell you;—has he not described his pupils to you, and didn't you recognize one of them, in my description?"

"He has never told me about his pupils. Aunt Louisa has heard from him two or three times, but not lately, and his letters were short."

Mr. Lowe wondered at Zandy's statement, but said to himself, "He seemed a reserved, invulnerable sort of fellow;" and aloud to Zandy: "I should think my mother would have happened to mention it—the fact of the Leightons being friends of ours, and of their thinking so highly of Mr. Hollister."

"I suppose it didn't occur to her that he had been our teacher," Zandy replied. "Tell me about the boy; has he always been deformed?"

"I believe so; I am not sure, however. It is really wonderful what an influence Mr. Hollister has gained over him in these few months. Before him, no tutor ever pretended to control Anthony, or *Tony*, as everybody calls him. He studied what he chose, and did what he chose, having unlimited supplies of pocket-money; and his terrible bursts of rage frightened away more than one teacher; indeed, he seemed to use his temper as a weapon with which to terrify people into submission to his caprices. He ruled his parents and brothers with a rod of iron. The last time I was at his home, in Philadelphia, some two years ago, he kept the house in a tempest continually. But now the demon seems completely exorcised, and Tony is like the man in the Bible, 'clothed and in his right mind.' His mother told me, with tears of joy, how Mr. Hollister had gradually won Tony's goodwill and respect by his fearless firmness, and unvarying kindness—making Tony feel that he was his master, and would not submit to his whims, while he was always patient and forbearing; and how at last,

after more than one severe contest of wills, Tony was conquered. Now Mr. Hollister checks him, and incites him to self-control, by a word or a look; and Tony's devotion to him is beautiful to see. Of course his faults are not overcome, but the victory is virtually won."

After a brief silence, which Zandy did not break, Mr. Lowe said, "I shall be glad to see more of Mr. Hollister; I have conceived the greatest admiration for him, though I doubt if people often get very near him.—Do you hear often from Miss Gellert?"

"Aunt Louisa hears from her—not very often. She is enjoying herself very much, I know, and I suppose has but little time to write letters."

"I think she has enjoyed herself," Mr. Lowe replied; "Mrs. Forsyth pets her, and takes her out as much as my more prudent mother will allow; in truth, I suspect that Miss Gellert regards mother as a decided check upon her gayeties. The 'beautiful American girl' has attracted a great deal of attention."

"I suppose so," said Zandy with a slight curl of her lip.

"Has my mother written to you, Miss Craighead, in regard to a plan she has for the summer?"

"No, I have not heard from her very lately."

"She will write of it soon, so I shall only forestall her intention a little: She proposes to leave Rome for Paris in two or three weeks"—

"Will Grace go with her to Paris?" asked Zandy.

"That will depend upon your aunt's wishes in regard to her. I am quite sure Miss Gellert herself would choose to go, as she is enthusiastic about Paris."

"I know she is," Zandy returned.

"The plan I referred to includes you, Miss Craighead," Mr. Lowe said, not failing to notice the brightening of Zandy's face. "When my portraits are painted we are to travel through Switzerland, and my mother proposes to make up for not having you with her in Rome, by taking you with her then. Your aunt can surely spare you, when your uncle comes."

Zandy hesitated.

"It would be lovely," she said, "and I want to see more of Switzerland, but I hope we shall go home. You can't know—you can't guess, how anxious I am to go home; how much I need to go."

"Do you think you will go as soon as your uncle comes?" asked Mr. Lowe, disappointed at her choice.

"Not at once, I am afraid; I don't know what Uncle William will think best to do, but I do not see how I can stay, even if

they do.—I hope you don't think me ungracious, and ungrateful for your mother's kindness," she added earnestly, "but I have been away from home so very long"—

"You could not be ungracious or ungrateful; but my mother will be sadly disappointed, and I"—

There was a little pause, and then Zandy asked if the Leightons were going back to America, as soon as the portraits were finished.

"I believe it is their intention to do so," Mr. Lowe replied.

"Will Mr. Hollister continue to teach the sons?" Zandy asked.

"No; Mrs. Leighton told me that her husband had offered him any salary he would name, if he would go on and prepare the older boys for college; but he refused, pleading his anxiety to finish his legal studies, and get started in his profession. Then Mr. Leighton proposed, at first to give, and then to lend him, any amount that he needed to get started; but Mr. Hollister would accept of nothing. Did you know how high-spirited and independent your teacher was?" he asked.

"I knew he was proud—too proud to accept help when he could help himself," Zandy replied quietly.

"The Leightons seem to have the highest opinion as to his attainments. Mr. Leighton, who is rather an accomplished man himself, speaks of them as very remarkable for so young a man."

The afternoon of the next day was made delightful to Zandy by a long walk with Mr. Lowe—the first she had enjoyed since the boys left her. They went on, busy with pleasant talk and the scenery, not realizing how time was passing, and so they reached home beneath the light of stars, and with the lamps gleaming along the quays.

When they entered the parlor, they found the room brightly lighted and the tea-table set; and Zandy saw that there was a fourth plate, and stood gazing at it, wondering with a beating heart, for whom it could be, when the door from her aunt's room opened, and her Uncle William came towards her with outstretched hands.

With a cry of surprise and gladness Zandy ran to him and threw her arms about his neck, and he clasped her affectionately and kissed her warmly, but his face was very grave.

"Oh! Uncle William!" she cried, as he released her, "how good it is to see you! I am so glad—so glad! and it is such a lovely surprise."

"My surprise was not a very cheerful one, my dear," her uncle said. "You cannot imagine how shocked I was at finding your aunt so ill."

"It must have been dreadful, uncle," Zandy replied, sorrowfully.

"Why did you keep it from me, child? you should have written me fully. Your letters and your aunt's have made me uneasy, of late, more by what they did not say, than by what they did, and made me hasten my coming. I don't mean to scold you, my dear," he added, lifting Zandy's face, and kissing her again, as he saw that her eyes were full of tears; "but it was a sad mistake; I ought to have come months ago."

Mr. Craighead soon threw off his depression, and then Zandy was thoroughly happy.

Mr. Lowe was to leave Geneva early the next morning, and felt that he must know something of Mr. Craighead's plans before he went; so when he was making his adieus, he asked if he intended to return home at once.

"I had no thought of returning before the autumn," Mr. Craighead said. "My plan was to spend the summer in traveling with my wife and Alexandra. But Mrs. Craighead is not, of course, able to travel at present, and I have been thinking, since I came, that I would take her to some desirable place, for a few weeks. I have no doubt a change of scene is what she needs, and a sea-voyage is not to be thought of in her present state."

"I should suppose not, indeed," Mr. Lowe replied, charging himself with selfishness for being so glad, when he saw how troubled Zandy looked; and he bade her good-by without expressing the hope he felt, that she might become reconciled to staying from home a few months longer, and might yet see Switzerland with his mother and himself.

The next day Zandy was happy in hearing a great deal about Oxley. Her uncle had spent two or three days there, before sailing, and so it was wonderfully satisfactory to hear everything from him, even things that she had already heard in letters. Mr. Craighead was not very fond of answering questions, but he was very patient with Zandy's insatiable thirst for details.

Until within the last year Zandy had admired and respected her uncle, without loving him much; while he was always kind, he kept her at a distance, and she felt, as she said, more like "a nobody" with him than with any one else. But her devotion to Helen, their common sorrow, and Zandy's womanliness, had made them intimate friends; and now she sat beside him, leaning on the arm of his chair, looking into his face, which she saw was older and more care-worn than when she saw it last, and asking her eager questions, as unreservedly as if it had been Dick or Royal.

"Wait, wait, rapacious girl!" cried her uncle, in the midst of a shower of inquiries and comments, leaning his head back and folding his hands resignedly; "I will begin at the beginning, and tell you everything that everybody said and did, and looked and wore, while I was there: It was by the late train, therefore it was very nearly nine o'clock, when I reached the house"—

"Were they expecting you?"

"No. I took them by surprise, and looked in at the library window to survey the scene, before I made myself visible." It was a chilly night, so, as a matter of course, there was a blazing fire, both in the hall and library, and it was a tolerably cheerful interior, as you will readily believe."

Zandy sighed an assent.

"Grandfather and grandmother sat by the table with their heads over a sketchy-looking drawing of a house, and I saw grandmother lay her hand very emphatically on grandfather's, and shake her head at him, and the cheek that was towards the fire was rosy, so I suppose they were having one of their dreadful altercations."

Zandy laughed appreciatively.

"Johnny was stretched upon the rug, with one arm for a pillow, toasting himself, and apparently teasing Corrie to come and toast with him; she sat at the table deep in a book"—

"Fairy stories," suggested Zandy.

"I suppose so—and Johnny was pulling her dress, and, I presume remonstrating at her neglect; but she was utterly oblivious to everything but her book."

"Darling!" ejaculated Zandy; "is she as pretty as ever?"

"Corrie? why yes," replied her uncle, "I think she is; her hair is as red and her nose as *retroussé*, and she has as many freckles"—

"And her mouth is as large, and her eyes as small and ugly," added Zandy indignantly.

"Yes, quite so," laughed her uncle. "But you can't get over the red hair and the pug nose, my dear, and so you can't make Corrie a beauty."

"Yes I can!—with those lovely brown eyes, so like Aunt Edith's, and that rosebud of a mouth, how can she *help* being a beauty?—dear little Corrie! I wish I could hug her this minute."

"So I wish I could, and I will admit that Corrie's face is charming, in spite of all imperfections. Well, where was I?—out on the piazza still?"

"Yes; what was Aunt Edith doing?—you haven't mentioned her."

"Oh! to be sure!—When I entered the gate I heard sweet sounds proceeding from the drawing-room, but they ceased before I reached the piazza; and having taken my observations of the library, I tiptoed across to see what was going on in the drawing-room; and there—but dear me! you are not old enough to hear about love scenes."

"Was Mr. Boyd there?" asked Zandy.

"Yes, he was; and imagine my dismay when I saw him—what do you suppose?—bend down and kiss your Aunt Edith, as she sat on the piano stool.—*Wasn't* it shocking? I felt it so; and worse still, Edith didn't resent it! but got up from her seat and put her two hands on his two shoulders and looked at him as if she loved him! not at all as if she were angry; and then he took her face between his two hands and actually kissed her again! and then they walked arm-in-arm, in the most amicable manner, out of the drawing-room into the library; and when I had recovered sufficiently from the shock, I went in myself. Of course there was a general uprising and excitement then"—Zandy sighed enviously—"and when it had subsided, I had a cup of tea, and a long visit around the fire ensued."

"You didn't tell what anybody wore," said Zandy.

"No; well, grandma had on—let me see, a black silk, rich and soft as is the wont of her dresses, and a cap trimmed with those soft, full ruches that we all approve, and violet bows. Your Aunt Edith wore a pretty gray silk, trimmed with a darker shade, and blue ribbons; and I must say, I never saw Edith look so well; I could not even find it in my heart to wish her hair brown again, as I always have before—even that could not have added to her loveliness. If any one had an idea that this world is dark and joyless, they need only look into Edith's face to get a revelation of sunshine and perfect contentment. I found that the drawing was a plan of Alexander's house, with some improvements that father is going to make in it."

"For Edith?" said Mrs. Craighead, "I thought father would build a new house for her."

"She preferred the other, and I am very glad; it will seem pleasant to have the cottage open and inhabited once more. They will live in it till Zandy is ready to keep 'old-maid's hall' there."

"Yes, but I thought Aunt Edith was going to live at home, with us," said Zandy, sorrowfully.

"So they would have done for the summer, if they had been married in June, as was intended. But as the marriage was postponed that I might have the summer over here, for rest from business, it was decided to have the cottage made ready

for their reception in the autumn, as they think they would like to begin life under their own vine and fig-tree."

"Do they want to see me?" asked Zandy, playfully, though with a few tears in her voice.

"Yes, a little; I think I heard one or two remarks to that effect. Royal and Dick, too, seemed to think it would be pleasant to behold you once more. I suppose you found their love done up in the presents they sent, and Mrs. Chandler's, too."

"Is Royal doing well in his studies?" asked Mrs. Craighead.

"Very—extremely well," was the hearty response;—meeting Zandy's anxious, tell-tale eyes, he added kindly, "I don't believe that jolly brother of your's is hurting himself at Latin and Greek this year, but I dare say when he gets over being a Sophomore he will take a new start."

It was a clear proof of the softening influence of his affliction, that Mr. Craighead could judge leniently of his wife's course during the past months and be patient with the fruits of it. Once her nervous melancholy would have only irritated him, and he would have been intolerant and imperative. He could scarcely credit the change that had come upon her; he would not have believed it possible, even when he left her, two months after Helen's death, that she would yield herself up so entirely to the dominion of a morbid sorrow—she who had seemed so strong-hearted, wise and unselfish. He still believed her to be all that, and did not pretend to fathom the mystery of her failure in this trial. He blamed himself for having left her to bear her grief alone, and for not having seen through the assumed cheerfulness of her letters, and felt painfully anxious to adopt the best means for restoring her to her true self.

For two weeks, by dint of gentle persuasion and gentle authority, she was induced to take a daily drive; and by the end of that time, there was apparent some improvement in her health and spirits; it was but slight, but it encouraged Mr. Craighead to broach the subject of a change. The proposal cast her into deep depression, but she admitted that she could not always live in Geneva, and the wrench might come, as well sooner as later;—she would go, she said, whenever her husband thought best.

He gladly acted upon the poor consent, and the arrangements were speedily made for the removal to Vevay, which had been decided upon, as easy of access, and in every way a desirable place for the first change from Geneva.

The sail on the lake enchanted Zandy; she had known nothing of its beauty before, she felt; and the mountains in all their varied shapes and groupings, some in shadow, some gray

with beetling rocks, or dark with bristling pines, some crowned with gleaming snows and spring sunlight--the picturesque towns, chateaus and castles on the gentler slopes of the northern shore,—all the loveliness that opened before her eager eyes, in grander or more exquisite revelations at each moment, filled her with delight; and she was overjoyed when she found that from her window at the hotel Trois Couronnes—separated from the blue waters only by its own lovely terraces and gardens—she could look out upon the very grandest part of all the grand scenery.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A JOY FOR EVER.

IT is July, and Mrs. Lowe and her son, Mr. and Mrs. Forsyth, Zandy and Grace, and Johnston Craighead are at Chamounix. They started from Vevay some two weeks ago, leaving Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Craighead there—Mrs. Craighead being still too ill to travel—and have already been over the St. Bernard Pass to Cormayeur, and seen Mont Blanc from the south. Their plans are very definitely arranged, as to places and routes, but all are free to take the trip leisurely, to rest when it seems desirable, and to see things satisfactorily.

Their first day in Chamounix has been spent in the quiet enjoyment of what can be seen without any exertion; and now Mrs. Lowe and her son, and Zandy and her uncle, who have been watching the sunset from an upper balcony of their hotel, are standing upon the piazza, and Zandy is insisting that she is perfectly rested, and able to take a walk with her uncle and Mr. Lowe up the valley. Her manner is a pretty mixture of girlish persistence and of sunny good humor; indeed, nothing could well be lovelier than she is in the eyes of those who look and listen now, and of chance observers—her eyes and hair so sunny, her lips so sweet and smiling, her every movement so full of simple, unconscious grace, and over all the bright bloom of happiness and perfect health. She is simply dressed in a dark gray travelling suit; but it is true, as Mrs. Forsyth says, that everything Zandy wears, even a simple black knot at her throat, seems to acquire dainty grace, and would not look the same if worn by any one else.

As to the rest of the group: Mrs. Lowe could not bear more distinguishing marks of gracious ladyhood if she were descended from kings. Her face tells of the discipline of suffering when in repose, but not less of the patience of hope; and when she smiles, as she does now, it lights up with kindly interest or enjoyment. She wears her hair in soft puffs in front, and in a French twist behind, fastened by a shell-comb—rather old-fashioned in style, but the effect cannot be criticized. Mr. Lowe is tall and slight; he has his mother's regular features and clear gray eyes, and the gentle, frank bearing that must remind one

of her, while it is altogether manly; his hair and moustache are light. Johnston is of the medium height, with broad shoulders, and a fine head, which his closely-cut hair shows to advantage; his full beard and moustache are sandy, a shade redder than his hair, and his brown eyes are clear, wide open and coolly observant, a little at variance with his manner, which carries a suggestion of indolence and love of ease; and it is true that he can sit still by the hour together, and enjoys nothing more than lying on the grass and basking in the sunshine.

Zandy carries her point, and she and the gentlemen are leaving the piazza, when Grace, just coming to the door, says, "Where are you all going?"

"I thought you were lying down, Grace," Zandy says; "will you walk with us? it is lovely and cool now."

"I don't think I could walk as far as you will want to," Grace says. "I will ask Mr. Forsyth to go with me to some of the shops to look at crystals; I am afraid I shall forget it if I wait, and that is really all I feel equal to, to-night."

"Mr. Forsyth is deep in a discussion of American politics with an Englishman, so you won't be likely to see him for some time to come," says Mr. Craighead, "and he won't be in a mood for looking at crystals, probably, when you do see him. So I will deny myself the pleasure of the long walk, and go shopping with you."

"Oh, no, I wouldn't have you give up your walk for me," remonstrates Grace.

"I think I shall survive the sacrifice, with all respect to Alexandra and Mr. Lowe, and the sights up the valley. The truth is, I am a little stiff, yet, from my previous exertions, and am quite willing to save myself for that stupendous climb to-morrow. O—h, it makes one groan to think of it."

"I am glad you do your groaning beforehand, Uncle Johnston," says Zandy, laughing at his dismal face.

Zandy and Mr. Lowe make but slow progress in their walk at first, there are so many beauties and changing effects to keep in view.

The snowy domes and rocky pinnacles, on one side of the wonderful valley, are still glowing in rose and gold; the glaciers gleam like vast, tumbling cataracts of molten silver; radiant cloudlets of purple fringed with gold, and of rose, and of silvery white, float airily over the mountains, and disappear one by one behind them, or melt into the blue. On the other side of the valley, the Breven and the Flegère are already gray and solemn; the first faint shadows of twilight are stealing softly upon the fertile fields, the rushing Arve, the scattered

chalets, the skirting pine forests, and over the group of hotels that seem like a bit of the fashionable world, set down in the heart of one of Nature's most cherished solitudes; and over all is the blue sky, a sapphire canopy resting on the tops of the lofty domes and aiguilles.

"See where we are going to-morrow," Mr. Lowe said by-and-by, directing Zandy's attention to the mountain on their right, the base of which was covered with woods, lying now in deep shadow, while the vast height towering steeply upward was gray and bald;—"you can hardly see the path."

"Path?" said Zandy, "I can see no path at all."

"Yes, you can—that line, that goes in sharp zigzags obliquely up the face of the mountain, is our road."

"That!" cried Zandy, following the line with incredulous eyes; "we shall have to go on foot and in single file—crawl like flies, rather."

"There is room for a mule and for some one to walk beside him to keep him from promenading down the mountain. I shall walk, as usual, and the rest of you will go on mules as far as the Planpraz Chalet, some two or three thousand feet up, where we leave the mules, and all proceed on foot to what is called the Cheminée, up which we climb at some risk of our necks, and then, from a height of eight thousand feet or more—above the sea, I mean—we shall look across to Mont Blanc, apparently on a level with our eyes, but really several thousand feet above them."

"How beautiful it is!"—Zandy said softly, when they had walked on a few steps, her eyes lifted to the wondrous Dome from which the rosy hue had but just faded, though the shadows were fast deepening.

Mr. Lowe saw, by the far-away look in her eyes, that she was thinking of Helen; he knew how tenderly the mountain was associated with her cousin, and so he walked on in silence beside her, waiting until she should feel like talking again.

For many minutes the silence was unbroken, save by the hum of insects from the woods, an occasional sleepy little song from a happy bird, the faint music of the pines, stirred by the gentlest of summer breezes, and the distant, vague rumblings and boomings that came from the grand solemn mysteries of the mountains; and all the time the shadows deepened through the valley and over the Breven and the Aiguilles, and the gleam of the glaciers and the rushing river was lost; and still, as if it were too near heaven for its brightness ever to be dimmed, the glorious Dome shone in transcendent whiteness against the darkened sky.

Suddenly Zandy and Mr. Lowe stopped, as by one impulse, with a subdued exclamation of wonder and delight; for above Mont Blanc, resting upon its glistening head, was a star, bright and clear as ever shone in the heavens, its golden lustre seeming to cast rays of light across the snowy whiteness upon which it stood.

"The evening star, the queen of the night—a royal princess, tarrying in her radiant progress to salute the kingly brow of the Monarch of Mountains!" said Mr. Lowe, when the bright planet had departed on her way.

"Helen's star," said Zandy softly, with quivering lips. "It rose above the mountain every night while she was in Geneva, and she called it hers."

They walked slowly on, but were presently roused from their quiet thoughts by the distant sound of wheels, and the clatter of horses' hoofs; and as the sounds drew nearer, they turned from the road, and stood in the edge of the woods, until the ponderous diligence had dashed by, with its four galloping horses, its jingling bells and cracking whip.

"We must go back," said Zandy, as the sounds died away in the distance; "how far have we come?"

"We haven't walked so very far, and it will not take us long to get back," Mr. Lowe said; "and it isn't late—only fairly dark."

But they walked towards the village at a brisk pace and talking busily, the clattering diligence having broken the spell of the darkness, and of the sight they could never forget.

It was rather startling, at least to Zandy, to hear, as they did presently, voices near them in the woods, and they slackened their pace to listen and see in what direction the owners were going; and soon saw three figures emerge into the road a little beyond them, and walk rapidly towards the town.

"That must be the path that leads to the Cascade du Dard," Mr. Lowe said, "and they may be pedestrian tourists from Geneva, who have taken the Cascade in their way."

They met Johnston Craighead and Grace, as they reached the hotel, and all went to the parlor together.

Zandy's hasty survey of the room, as they entered and crossed to the quiet corner where the Forsyths and Mrs. Lowe were sitting, gave her an impression of several quiet, sober-colored groups of people, and of one in the opposite corner that was anything but sober-colored, or quiet; it seemed a fluttering confusion of bright colors and busy tongues. She was not conscious, as she seated herself beside Mrs. Lowe, that several pairs of curious eyes were watching her, and that she was the

subject of an animated discussion. Presently the two young ladies in the group got up, with shaking out of puffs and flourishes, and brief speech with a fat, elderly lady in green silk, point-lace and diamonds, who in her turn communicated with the brisk, sharp-featured little man beside her. Two young men joined the young ladies, and with some tittering and whispering on the part of the girls, the four made their way around and between the other groups.

Zandy was the last to notice what was going on, and when she turned her head, her uncle, who was watching her, was amused to see her look of astonishment give way to one of dismay. She seemed to meditate precipitate flight, for she glanced at the door, and half-started forward—but there was no escape, as the two young ladies stood before her, and began to talk fast and loud, and both together, about being so glad to meet her again, and in this place of all places in the world; and of how Cousin Morry knew her first thing, and they had declared it wasn't the same girl at all, but had had to give in at last.

"She doesn't know us yet, Floss," one said, with rather an uncomfortable laugh, as Zandy, overcome with confusion at being made so conspicuous, made no sign of recognition, only blushed painfully and looked down, and then at one and another of her silent friends. "Come here, Morry, and introduce us; maybe she'll remember you."

Morry came with evident reluctance, and offered his hand to Zandy, who hesitated but a moment, and then yielded hers.

"There! I said so," laughed Nett; "now, Morry, introduce us all round. You don't know our names. Proceed, Morry."

Morry plainly did not in the least relish his cousin's proposal, but there seemed no help for it. So he said, "This is Miss Stanton and this is Miss Nett Stanton, and I am Morris Stanton."

"Mr. Smith, Miss Craighead," said one of the girls, presenting the other young man. "Now we all know each other; so bring some chairs, Morry."

"Isn't it the richest thing that we should have met, after all this time, in this outlandish place?" remarked Miss Nett Stanton, when they had gone through the commotion of getting seated, while she glanced inquisitively at Zandy's friends. "I didn't know as you'd recognize us, but we were bound to try it—people don't stand on ceremony when they're travelling, you know. Why, goodness! ain't that the young man—yes, and the old lady, that you got acquainted with that time?"

Zandy assented.

"Well, I never!—just met 'em as you have us, by chance?"

"No."

"Kept up the acquaintance, hey? Well, that's funny, are you travelling in the same party?"

"Yes."

"Where've you been?—how long since you came abroad?"

"Nearly two years."

"Bless me! as long as that? Why, you must have been all over creation."

"We have not travelled much."

"That so? why, we've only been here five months, and we've been 'most everywhere, seems to me. You've been to Paris, of course. Oh *ciel!* how I adore Paris! I wish I could live there forever. I hate London, dingy old place, all except the gardens and Crystal Palace on fête days, and Hyde Park in the afternoon."

"You didn't hate one thing there, I remember, Floss," said Mr. Smith, with a simper.

"What do you mean?—oh! I know—those heavenly wax-works! how could I forget them? *Ma chère,*" she cried, laying her hand on Zandy's knee, "if you don't see another earthly thing in London, see the wax-works, and if you don't say they are bewitching, and the loveliest things you ever *did* see!—you'll go wild, positively wild, over the dresses—ah, *si ravishment!* as the French say."

"Do you suppose she'll speak to the old Quaker at the door?" asked Mr. Smith, with another simper.

"Oh, I dare say; everybody does. I could have stayed there a week, and then not have been tired."

"The shops in Paris were what turned *my* head," cried Nett, clasping her hands and casting up her eyes. "Heavens, though, how we did slave to get our things, and get 'em made! We didn't see a thing except on Sundays. Of course, home we go to church and are very strict, but here in Europe what's the use of wasting the time that way? When you're in Rome you must do as the Romans do, I say. We went once to the—what was that place where there were such stacks of pictures, Floss?"

"The *Magasin de Louver.*"

"Ridiculous!" cried Morry, reddening with mortification, "that was the great shop where you stayed days at a time. It was the Louvre, where you saw the pictures."

"Oh, yes! well, any way, I think it's an odious place; the pictures are well enough, but I was just dead before we'd seen half of 'em, and ma insisted that it was our duty to see such things, and cultivate our taste for art. I wish you could have seen *her* do the thing! she'll trot out Rubens and Ruskin and

Raphael, and all the old masters, when she gets home. But oh! *have* you been to Brussels?"

"No."

"Well, when you do, be sure to see Wiertz's gallery; I don't know who painted the pictures, but they are the most delicious things in the world. I was nearly frightened to death when I first went in—the walls were so covered with great, hideous monsters and creatures with one eye, fighting and tossing each other about like mad—perfectly splendid, wasn't it, Floss? And you go up in one corner and look through a little hole, and there you'll see a coffin! with a man in it that's been put in alive!—only a picture, you know, but it looks like a real man; and in another corner is a woman tearing a baby to pieces and putting it into a pot, and *that* looks as natural as life; and then there is a beautiful lady painted right onto the wall, looking out of an open window, and a lady coming out of her room—all painted, you know, but fixed so that everything looks like reality, and it's perfectly splendid. I never *was* so enchanted. But dear me! I was enchanted so often—the concerts and things in the *Chonges Elizy*—in Paris, you know—Don't you want a lot of addresses to shops and dressmakers, and so on in Paris? If you do, I'll write 'em down for you. We found some splendid places."

"Thanks," Zandy answered; "you are very kind, but I don't think I shall need them."

"Oh, sakes! if you could see the cartloads of things we brought away with us—*fifteen trunks full!* We shall have a great time fibbing the things through; *pa declares* he won't pay duties, but I guess he'll have to."

"Do you like Switzerland, Miss Craighead?" asked Mr. Smith.

"Yes, I think it is pleasant," replied Zandy.

"Have you been over any of the passes yet," asked Morry.

"Yes, the St. Bernard."

"Oh, heavens!" cried Miss Stanton. "I never want to see a mule or a pass again, as long as I live. We came over the *Tête Noyer*, and I nearly lost my senses, and I don't think it pays. I ain't got over it yet; nothing but looking up at great piles of earth and stones on one side, and down no end of precipices on the other. I like the cities best, don't you?—We've been here three days, but la, ma and Nett and I have been in bed most of the time. I shall say we saw the *Mur de Glaice*, for we have, you know, though we haven't been over it; one hates to say they haven't done things that it's the thing to do, but then—oh, are you going?"—she said, as Zandy followed the example of

Mrs. Lowe and the rest of her friends, and rose to leave the room. "I wish we were going to stay, now, and we could take some excursions together. I don't mind getting tired if it pays—a nice large party makes *such* a difference"—and she gave Mr. Lowe and Mr. Craighead admiring, wistful glances. "But *pa* will go to-morrow; do see him beckoning to us! and *ma* is yawning—poor old thing; she's lame yet from being jounced so awfully. Well, if you must go, good-by."

"Here's our card," said Nett, "and do call and see us when you get home, or send us word, and we'll come to you: I suppose that will be *on reegle*, if we get there first."

"I think I never heard so much wisdom in the same length of time, as fell from the lips of your friends," said Johnston Craighead, as they went up stairs.

"Oh, wasn't it dreadful?" said Zandy. "I do hope nobody heard it except ourselves; I didn't dare to look at anybody."

"They are really pretty girls," said Mrs. Forsyth, "they have delicate features and complexions, and ladylike hands, but oh, oh, what boldness and what airs—so loud and ill-bred! it makes me blush, indeed it does. I had to look at you, my loves, for comfort, when I had looked at them."

The ascent of the Breven was made the next day, as had been planned, without any noteworthy adventures, though with plenty of intense pleasure in the excitement of climbing to such heights, and in the wonderful beauty of the views.

Then followed a day of rest and quiet enjoyment of the mountains, with the added effects of cloud-shadows and floating mists, and then came Montanvert, the Mer de Glace, and the Mauvais Pas.

That evening Mr. Craighead made the tour of the hotels, in search of some friends who had expected to be in Chamounix about that time; and at one of them found registered the name of Stephen Hollister and the two young Leightons. He made inquiries, hoping to find them there still; but learned that they had been the day before up the Breven, and the day before that over the Mer de Glace, and that morning had started for Martigny, over the Tête Noir pass.

"Oh, why didn't we know they were here! why didn't they find us?"—cried Mrs. Forsyth, when Johnston Craighead related his discoveries; "they might have gone with us up the Breven and over the Mer de Glace, and then have waited and gone on with us. Only think of three more young gentlemen, my dears!—what belles you would have been!"

"We must have seen them that night, Miss Alexandra," said Mr. Lowe, "and might have hailed them, and found out."

"I cannot understand our not meeting—some of us—by chance," said Mrs. Forsyth; "in this little huddle of hotels, how can anybody help seeing everybody?"

"Bodies that are constantly on the move are not apt to see much of other bodies," said Mr. Craighead. "I suppose those misguided young persons got up at daybreak and went to bed at sundown, and thought of nothing but their plans for the day."

Grace, for a wonder, loitered into Zandy's room that night, and said, as she seated herself with a sigh, "Oh, I am so thankful Stephen didn't join us—that he and I didn't meet!"

"Why?" Zandy asked, busying herself at the bureau.

"Well—because;—I think, for one thing, that it is better for us not to meet until he has quite forgotten—recovered from his fancy; and then, for my *own* sake;—how can I tell what might happen?—I cared a great deal for Stephen—and he for me."

Zandy said not a word, and Grace soon departed, having said what she came to say.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

AMONG THE CLOUDS.

"REALLY, this is wonderful, is it not, Mr. Craighead? I have seen pictures of that mountain, and heard it described over and over again, but the half was never told me. It fairly takes one's breath away. My husband says it does his, quite—not the sights, but the air, it is so rarefied, and he declares he shall go straight back to Zermatt in the morning—poor man."

"Mrs. Forsyth! he won't really, will he? It would be too dreadful to stay here only one night. I never shall want to go!"

"Oh, you need not be worried, my dear Zandy; we shan't have to go if he does. I have no notion, myself, of going right down again, after all the fuss of getting up—you needn't smile, Mr. Craighead, for I did nearly lose my senses, in my fear lest those stupid men should drop me. I should have been a great deal more comfortable, in my mind, at least, if I had been on my own blessed feet. It did very well until we got above the woods, and then it seemed, at every step, as if I were going head first down the mountain. I never, *never* shall forget my horrible sensations. No, indeed! If Mr. Forsyth has to go down to-morrow he will go without me; but perhaps his asthma will be better by morning; I hope it may, I am sure, dear man."

"I hope so, indeed."

"Was there ever such a place as this, to be sure!—a mountain surrounded by mountains, and that Matterhorn! Well, well! what can one say to that? We might think we were on the tip-top of the world ourselves, if it were not for that tremendous thing standing there right before our eyes, as high again, I suppose, as any of the other mountains—a mountain on top of a mountain.—Well, well!—If a man could stand on the top of that Matterhorn—he couldn't, for there isn't room for his feet—but if he could he certainly would see the whole of this side of the world, at least, and his head would touch the blue sky. Ah! there you are Mrs. Lowe, my dear, and looking almost as fresh as if you had been taking your ease, instead of riding mule-back up two thousand feet; and there is

Arthur too—but then he never gets tired," Mrs. Forsyth said, as Mr. Lowe followed his mother out to where the others stood, "or Alexandra either; see how bright her eyes are, and her cheeks, after walking half the way from Zermatt. You were both made for travelling, there's no doubt about that; you are both as sure-footed as the chamois. I never wish to see Switzerland without you two for company. I should miss your gay voices and bright faces too much, indeed."

"I didn't know that anybody had enjoyed our good times, except ourselves, did you, Mr. Lowe?" Zandy said, with a bright look at him.

"And here comes Grace," cried Mrs. Forsyth. "Why did you come down, my dear? You should have rested to-night."

"I am only a little tired, and I wanted to see, with the rest of you," said Grace, seating herself on one of the benches that stood under the windows.

"You and I are not fitted for such severe exertions, are we?" said Mr. Craighead, sitting down beside her.

"I must go and look after my good husband," exclaimed Mrs. Forsyth, "or he will think I have quite forgotten his existence. I might be excused if I did, in this place; isn't it wonderful?"

With another admiring look she departed. Mrs. Lowe and Zandy sat down upon the bench on the other side of the door. Mr. Lowe leaned against the door-post, and all silently contemplated the magnificent scene.

The vast expanse of the Riffel itself stretched steeply down to the valley below, beyond which, on the right, rose the dark walls, whose pinnacles of snow shone in dazzling whiteness, or in changeful hues of rose and purple and orange, in the setting sun; and the chain of snowy summits, each with some distinguishing grace or glory of its own, circled on, hidden from sight at the left by an envious shoulder of the Riffel. The great glaciers lay in the hollows of the mountains and curved their icy billows, in semblance of free, foaming torrents, down towards the valleys; and the little Riffelhorn, like a frowning fortress, stood near by. In the midst, solitary in its towering majesty as if it rose from a world-wide plain, beautiful in its outlines, overwhelming in its vastness, rose the gray obelisk of the Matterhorn.

The spell of wondering delight was broken, before long, by fresh arrivals from below, and parties returning from excursions. Some of these were merry and bright, as if in excellent training and incapable of fatigue; such were two or three ladies, with robust figures, blooming faces, and blithe, sweet voices, in plain stuff dresses, and the two or three gentlemen with them, with

sunburnt faces, and hats adorned with light scarfs, able to tell the name of every peak, near or far, counting them "brothers." Others were quiet and listless, as if they had found their tramp very wearying, and were not sure that it paid; such were two or three ladies, with delicate faces and figures, and high, thin, pensive voices, in fancy hats and elaborate dresses, pretty but dilapidated and travel-stained, and their escorts, making good use of their faithful alpen-stocks in this their first essay at Alpine climbing.

Two young men came from the direction of the Gorner Grat, and as they descended the path towards the house, one of them, who carried sketching materials, scanned the various groups gathered on the flagging before it, with eager, expectant eyes; suddenly his face lighted up, and he hurried on and clasped Mr. Lowe's hand.

"Have you got here at last?" he cried; "I thought you would never come."

"Why, have you been looking for us, Brooke?" Mr. Lowe asked, returning his friend's hearty shake.

"To be sure I have—looking for you all the way here, and waiting for you here for half a week. I was afraid to go, for fear you would come, and afraid to stay, for fear you wouldn't; and all together I've been tormented, and you can imagine what a relief it is to see you. My dear Mrs. Lowe! don't shake your head at me," he exclaimed, his face flushing a little, as his eyes came back from an earnest scrutiny of the occupants of the other bench, and he grasped Mrs. Lowe's offered hand in both his own.

"You can't expect me to approve of your putting yourself in harm's way, my dear Brooke," Mrs. Lowe said. "I didn't know that you thought of coming to Switzerland this summer."

"I didn't think of it—at least I didn't mean to do it—when you left Rome, but—well, I couldn't help it, Mrs. Lowe;—the harm, if harm it should be called, was done, and I—who is that talking to her?—do tell me."

Mrs. Lowe and the young man had withdrawn a little from Zandy and Arthur; and Mrs. Lowe replied, "It is one of our party—the uncle of the young lady who is talking with Arthur: Mr. Craighead."

"Oh, is that the Miss Craighead of whom I heard so much in Rome?—I might have known it if I had once looked at her hair and eyes; how very pretty she is! But isn't she Miss Gellert's cousin? and isn't that man *her* uncle, too?"

"They are connected by marriage," Mrs. Lowe replied, unable to repress a smile, sorry as she felt to see the jealous fires in

her young friend's eyes;—"Come, let me introduce you to Miss Craighead, and then you may speak to Miss Gellert—as you are here, and there is no help for it."

"Not now—you may introduce me, but I can't speak to *her* now; she hasn't seen me, and I would rather wait"—and he glanced again at Grace, whose face was turned towards Mr. Craighead, with whom she talked busily while he quietly observed everything.

Mrs. Lowe introduced Mr. Donovan to Zandy, and a moment after he excused himself to dispose of his sketching things, and to improve his general appearance, as he said, and Mr. Lowe went with him. Mrs. Lowe looked after them, as they walked arm-in-arm through the hall, with sorrowful eyes, saying to herself, "I would rather have given up seeing Switzerland altogether than to have had this happen." Meeting Zandy's look, she said lightly, "To think of his waiting here for us so long! I was never more surprised than at seeing him. He is the son of my dearest friend, and seems almost like my own child. You have often heard us speak of Brooke Donovan, my dear?"—Mr. Craighead and Grace joined them at the moment—"Are we going to have a thunder-storm?" she asked, looking at the clouds.

"I think there is little doubt of it," answered Mr. Craighead, as they went to the edge of the flagged platform; "the sky has been growing threatening for some time."

As they stood and watched, the clouds—that had but shown their heads above the mountains at sunset, glowing with crimson and gold, and had climbed up and up, and gradually lost their glory and grown dark and jagged—mounted higher still, and crept across, and swiftly spread their black wings in every direction. The snowy heights and the curving glaciers still shone serenely white, but the valleys were full of deep shadows. The Matterhorn reared his mighty head in the midst of the crowding, tumultuous wings, frowning fiercely when they swept across his face, but grandly calm in his unassailable strength and majesty. The noise of the countless, but distant and invisible, waterfalls and torrents waxed loud and fierce, as if in exulting sympathy with the spirits of the storm, and the thunder began to mutter and rumble, and break into angry peals, seeming to answer shuddering expostulations from the white-robed mountains, that in their turn sharply retorted; and the flashes, at first faint, that broke from the black tumult of clouds, grew sharp and vivid, and more and more frequent.

It was a wild, magnificent scene, and everybody was eagerly watching, pressing hither and thither to get the different views.

"Isn't this glorious?" asked Mr. Lowe, coming to Zandy's side, as she and his mother and Grace stood together; and Zandy turned in time to see the meeting between Mr. Donovan and Grace.

Even she, so little versed in such things, could not fail to read truly the worshipping look in Mr. Donovan's dark blue eyes, the flush that overspread his face, the tremulousness of his lips, as he spoke, and the lingering clasp of the hand; and she turned away from Grace's pretty, careless face, with a sigh that came from the depths of her heart.

Mr. Lowe saw it all, and knew that Zandy saw it, and he heard or felt the sigh; but he said nothing, only stood looking with her at the wild scene, feeling that they were sharing the same regrets. His were more definite, for he had been listening to an outburst of passion from his impulsive friend for the girl he and Zandy knew to be so unworthy such love, that had made his heart sink, and kept it aching and heavy now.

Presently Johnston Craighead joined them: "There is a party out who are likely to get caught in the storm," he said—"some young men who went up the Cima di Jazzi this morning."

"What! haven't they come in yet?" asked Mr. Donovan in surprise. "They should have been back two or three hours ago; something must have happened to them."

"No, the gentlemen who told me say they have excellent guides, and there is no danger of any accident: but they must have undertaken more than they intended, and the only fear is, their being overtaken by the darkness and the storm together."

A vivid, blinding flash of lightning, a terrific crash of thunder that struck the shuddering snow-peaks, rebounded and crashed again, and pealed and roared and rattled through the heavens, over the glaciers, through the valleys, among the heights the most distant and the nearest, seeming to shake the whole world, was followed by the rush of mighty winds from every quarter, and by the deluging waters. And in a moment the platform was deserted; everybody had taken refuge in the house, amid screams and exclamations and general confusion, and the tempest and the Matterhorn ruled without.

There was but little chance to watch the storm from within: the parlor was at the back and on the wrong side of the house, looking out against the higher point of the Riffel; so people disposed themselves as best they could, trying to forget the storm in talking of other things, or waited nervously for the vivid flashes, that were blinding, even within, and for the peals and crashes that followed. Zandy, Grace, Mr. Lowe and Mr. Don-

ovan found themselves wedged into a corner of the parlor. Grace was pale and trembling, and could not be diverted, and Zandy was grave and quiet, and disappointed at being shut up in a room full of people, instead of enjoying the storm in her own way, so that the attempts of the young men at conversation were very unsuccessful.

Mrs. Lowe went up stairs to see Mrs. Forsyth, who had not returned from looking after her husband. She found Mr. Forsyth very much out of sorts, being greatly pressed for breath, and wishing himself safely down in the valley. Mrs. Forsyth never did enjoy thunder-storms, and her friend was amused at seeing her perched on the high bed, with her feet on a chair, and a shawl, in many folds, about her head, to deaden the horrible noise of the thunder.

"Isn't it perfectly dreadful?" she exclaimed, as Mrs. Lowe sat down beside her on the bed, throwing the shawl back that she might hear her friend's welcome voice; "it seems as if every flash was aimed straight at this house, and when those awful crashes come, as if the house and the mountain, and we with them, were torn to atoms and dashed against the Matterhorn. O dear! I do wish it would stop."

"It will before long," said Mrs. Lowe, comfortingly; "the worst must be over; and I have a bit of news to tell you, which I am afraid will make you glad, though it ought to make you very sorry;" and she proceeded to tell her of Brooke's arrival, and tried to make her share her own regrets and anxieties, in the hope that she might behave judiciously and not be carried away by the "charm of a desperate love-affair"—no easy task, for Mrs. Forsyth, as she said of herself, was a born match-maker."

When Mrs. Lowe went down again, and looked into the parlor, she saw that Grace and Mr. Donovan were sitting alone in the corner where she had left them, talking busily, and she felt that she ought to join them at once; but went to the outer door to look for Zandy and her son, catching a glimpse of Mr. Craighead in the office, smoking, as she passed. She found Arthur standing just outside.

"You are getting wet, my dear boy," she said, laying her hand on his shoulder.

"Am I?" he answered, stepping within shelter.

They stood for a minute or two, watching the swift alternations of all-pervading brightness and the blackness of darkness.

"Did you see Alexandra up-stairs, mother?" Arthur asked.

"No, dear; I supposed you were all in the parlor. Did she go up-stairs?"

"I believe she did—of course she must have done so; there was nowhere for her to go but to her own room, and I suppose she found the lights and the talking and laughing, in the parlor, as unendurable as I did—when she had left it."

"I hope those young men have come back safely."

"I don't think they have," Arthur answered, as they went in together.

In the mean time Zandy was up stairs, sitting by an open window, at the end of the long dark hall. The rooms of her party were all at the back of the house, and feeling that she could not lose all the glory of the storm, she had taken quiet possession of the front window. If anybody noticed her being there she was none the wiser, for the noise of the storm kept her from hearing footsteps, and besides, she was absorbed in the scene without. With strained gaze she watched for the outlines of the Matterhorn through the sheets of white light and the floods of rain, and with each glimpse of the stupendous head towering unmoved amid the wild tumult, it seemed to Zandy more unspeakably grand.

At length—and whether there came a lull in the storm that let her hear voices and the tramping of feet below, she could not have told—something impelled her to lean out of the window and look down in time to see, by a lightning flash, and then by the light that streamed from windows and door, the forms of five or six men hurrying across the flagging and into the house. The glimpse she had of them gave her an impression of general dilapidation that left her in no doubt as to their being the party from the Cima di Jazzi. After those who made such good speed to gain shelter, came others walking slowly, one of the number being carefully supported by two guides, while the fourth followed closely.

Zandy lifted her head when the last one had disappeared within the door, and sat motionless, looking out into the storm, until she became conscious of voices mingling confusedly with the noise of the storm.

The stairs came up in the midst of the long hall on one side, and it seemed to Zandy's half-dazzled eyes, as she turned from the window, as though torch-lighted processions were passing up and down, filing to right and left. Of those who turned to the left, coming towards Zandy, the three who came first, after the servants carrying candles, were Mr. Lowe and Mr. Donovan, half leading, half carrying a dripping boy, while of the two, equally drenched, who followed, one was Stephen Hollister.

They all entered a room at a little distance, and Zandy, who had started to her feet, saw that the door was left wide open,

making the hall so light that retreat seemed impossible. While she stood irresolute, Stephen again appeared, coming to a room nearer the window, followed by a servant to whom he gave a flask, taking from him a lighted candle. Turning instinctively towards the figure that shrank into the dark corner, the light from Stephen's candle fell full upon Zandy's white face. Before a word had been uttered a sudden gust had put out the candle, and as the open door was that instant closed, the two were left in darkness. As suddenly, a flash had turned darkness into lurid light, and then came a peal of thunder that shook the house to its foundations, and it seemed an endless time to Zandy before the din had died away, and her companion spoke.

"One has no choice," said Stephen's most matter-of-fact voice through the darkness, "but to wait the motions of the rude elements. I needn't ask if you are well, Miss Craighead, since I find you on the top of the Riffel, with nerves steady enough to face a storm like this, alone, and by an open window."

"I am well—I am glad you are back safely."

"Thank you, I am glad too."

"Was it one of your friends, one of the Leightons, who was helped to his room?"

"Yes, Charlie, poor boy; the climb proved too much for him."

Just then Mrs. Lowe came towards them, shielding her candle with her hand.

"Why, are you here, my dear?" she exclaimed, upon seeing Zandy. "We didn't know what had become of you—wait a moment, I will go down with you. I came, Mr. Hollister, to see if I could do anything for that poor boy?—and for you, too. You should have some hot drink at once, and get off those wet clothes."

"I am not concerned for myself, and I think Charlie is suffering only from exhaustion. If I had known before we started, as I did when we were half-way up the Cima, that he had been concealing an indisposition for a day or two, fearing it would prevent this expedition, I of course should not have undertaken it, and he would have been saved a very miserable day."

"And you, as well, I should think," said Mrs. Lowe. "But for the delay caused by his becoming helpless, the others say, you would have been back before the storm. But you must not stand here another instant. I will see Charlie, and send you a cordial, and then you must come down and have supper, and give us an account of your adventures."

"I fear not to-night," said Stephen; "as our luggage from Visp consisted of a hand-bag apiece, we shall be forced to take

our supper in bed, and send our clothes to the laundry to be dried."

"A very clear case," said Mrs. Lowe, "and very likely it is the best way to ward off any bad effect of your hardships. Good night."

When Mrs. Lowe stopped at the Leightons' door, Zandy ran to her own room, and stayed there until Mrs. Lowe came for her, saying that she must make up for her desertion by being specially agreeable until bed-time.

They found Grace's spirits quite restored by the comparatively calm state of the elements, and looking, as Mrs. Lowe noticed, with a pang, unusually attractive, even for her. The young man with whom Mr. Donovan had come down from the Gorner Grat that evening, was talking with her and Mr. Craighthead, having gained an introduction to them, and Grace's pretty face and gentle gaiety were evidently appreciated by him.

Arthur and his friend appeared before long, and as they made their way through the intervening groups, Mrs. Lowe watched them, saying sadly to herself, "Poor Brooke, he is jealous of everybody. How is your patient now?" she asked, as the young men drew near.

"He is doing well, being fast asleep, mother," said Arthur, as he seated himself near Zandy, while Brooke stood behind him and looked at Grace.

"And Mr. Hollister and George—are they comfortable?"

"As much so as good suppers and downy beds can make them."

"I am very thankful that their state is no worse," said Mrs. Lowe devoutly, "and now I think we had better have our supper."

"A very happy suggestion, Mrs. Lowe," exclaimed Mr. Donovan; "I, for one, am nearly famished," at which Arthur smiled inwardly, as on the way down-stairs Brooke had declared himself not in the least hungry.

The departure to the dining-room had the effect desired by Mr. Donovan, as it dispensed with the company of the stranger, and he was careful not to quit his place at Grace's side again that evening.

Every one inspected the weather before going to bed. Even yet there were distant mutterings of thunder, and the clouds hung low over the mountains, but through every rift the stars looked brightly down, giving cheering promises for the next day, and plans were discussed with eager volubility.

"Shall you climb the Gorner Grat to-morrow?" Mr. Donovan asked of Grace, as they stood a little apart from the others, out on the platform.

"Oh, I suppose I must."

"Why must you?" asked he, eagerly. "It is a very tiresome climb, and the views are too severely grand and cold for you to enjoy, and you are not strong enough—do stay, and let me have one talk with you when there are not crowds of people to watch us."

"I can't," said Grace; "you know if I stayed you would have to go."

"Then I will show you the easiest way, and we will take our time about it; and if that fellow puts himself in our way, I am afraid I shall push him off a precipice. How could you talk to him and smile upon him so, Grace?"

Grace laughed and pouted. "You know that I can't talk to you and look at you all the time. Mrs. Lowe would send me right back to Vevay if I did. I *must* be polite to other people, and you mustn't be cross about it."

"Oh, Grace, if you would but have let me come to Vevay and tell your uncle of our love!—he might have overlooked my poverty and consented to an engagement, and we might be so happy!"

"My aunt would never have consented. She thinks me too young, and disapproves, above all things, of long engagements."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the young man with a groan, "what a hideous fate it is that makes me a beggar, and that selfish stoic as rich as Croesus. How long am I to endure this raging tempest of longing and jealousy, being all the time regarded by others—not that I care a whit for that—as a persecuting ruffian?"

"You have no cause for jealousy, you know, dear Brooke, and no one need know of your caring for me, if you were"—

"If I were a block of ice!" interrupted Brooke. "I shouldn't be jealous if you belonged to me; as it is, the torture is more than I can bear."

"I am sure you would be much happier to give me up," said Grace, sadly. "You know I told you so in Rome."

"Give you up, when I know that you have thought kindly of me—when I have, with all my misery, the rapture of hoping—believing, that you love me?—Why must you wait till you are of age to act independently, why doom me to a dreadful year of this uncertainty? Why can't you confide all to Mrs. Lowe?—she would not have the heart to oppose us."

"She would not help us, Brooke—she has made me feel that she thinks such a thing quite unsuitable. She thinks a poor man should have a wife who is all good sense and energy, not a

useless little thing like me. She forgets that I may have a fortune of my own some day."

"I wish in my soul that I could forget it," said Brooke bitterly, "or that the hateful fact did not exist."

"I don't see why it is a hateful fact," said Grace, with a pretty petulance; "I think a fortune is very nice, and I only wish I were perfectly sure of mine—for then we need have no fears for the future, you know."

"I have no fears," said Brooke quickly. "I could rely upon my willing hands and brains to provide for the woman I love—I could win money and fame with such an incentive. But you, Grace, is it because you are afraid to trust me that you refuse to brave anything for my sake?—do you dread poverty more than you care for me?" His tone was almost harsh with suppressed feeling.

"No, no," Grace replied, "I am not afraid, except for your sake; if I only knew how to do useful things, and how to be economical, and was very strong, there would be no danger of my ever being what Mrs. Lowe calls 'a dead weight' upon anybody."

"You make me feel that I am very selfish, Grace—that I ought to give you up to some one who is so rich, that you need never know an ungratified wish. But I can't," he exclaimed, passionately; "and what are jewels and luxuries to a loving, clinging nature like yours, compared with love such as I give you?"

"Nothing, I am sure," said Grace. "But still," she added, when he would have caught her hands in his, regardless of the neighboring groups—"still I *can't* say anything different now about being engaged, and if you really care for me so much, you will let me treat you like a friend and be pleasant to others, and make it easy for me, instead of looking all the time so fierce and cross. You don't know how you frighten me sometimes—you don't, indeed," and a pathetic tear sounded in the pleading words.

"I will do the best I can, darling; but don't make it too hard for me," said Mr. Donovan sadly, then added, "Why did that Stephen Hollister turn up here, I wonder. Is there any danger of his trying to make love to you again?"

"No, indeed! he knows it would be useless," said Grace, decidedly; "didn't you notice how cold and indifferent he seemed when we met in the hall?"

"But there is Mr. Craighead—he is rich."

"And old enough to be my father."

"And Croesus, with his pedigree and his money-bags."

"And his beauty and wit," said Grace, laughing. "And Mr. Lowe—aren't you distressed by his marked attentions to me?"

"I wish all the men you meet were equally pre-occupied."

"Thanks!" was the response. "Mrs. Lowe is very careful that we shall make no new acquaintances in travelling. If Mrs. Forsyth had her way, we should have much gayer times—she is so nice!"

"Yes, I remember how nice you thought her in Rome, when she let you flirt all you liked, and encouraged you in it. That is all I have against my white lily, her love of flirting—I want all her smiles for myself."

"Greedy Brooke," said Grace, with a little laugh, "why should you care, when you know that I like you better than any one else?"

"Like?" he echoed.

"Love, adore you, then."

"Did you like, or adore, the Count?" asked Mr. Donovan suddenly, ashamed of the words the instant they were spoken.

"I thought you promised never to speak that hateful name again," said Grace. "I never, *never* shall forgive the Lowes for telling you. They wanted to make you despise me, and I think they did."

"Grace! forgive me, I despise myself for paining you. I know it was only the misery of your life in Geneva that so nearly drove you to marrying that villain. Can you wonder that the very thought makes me beside myself? While I execrate Miss Craighead for helping to make your days more intolerable, I shall feel everlastingly grateful to her for rescuing you."

"Miss Gellert,"—Grace started—"and Mr. Donovan, I am commissioned by Mrs. Lowe to recall you from your absorbed contemplation of the stars, as the time has arrived when Miss Gellert, at least, should hie her to her couch, to seek from kind Nature strength for the toils of the morrow."

"Hasn't it cleared off beautifully, Mr. Craighead?" said Grace, turning with him to the door—"we are sure of a pleasant day to-morrow; don't you think so?"

"All signs would seem to justify such a confidence," he replied.

"You are not coming in?" Grace said, as Mr. Craighead seated himself on one of the benches.

"Not quite yet. I think my nerves require an extra cigar to-night."

"I hope you will enjoy it. Good night."

Johnston lighted his cigar, and as he smoked, his thoughts

ran on this wise: "So that is Grace Gellert, whom appearances declare to be an innocent, artless girl. Let me see—what were her words to me?—'O yes, I met him in Rome occasionally'; 'I didn't know him very well'; 'he seemed a pleasant young man'—and to him—'love' and 'adore!' Eaves-dropping is not a practice to be commended in general, but in this instance I think it at least justifiable. The most humiliating position on earth is that of a man humbugged by a pretty woman. Anything is well that opens his eyes. What were those references to a Count and to Alexandra?—I must search into the mystery. Some one should warn that young man—noble-hearted fellow, of course—they are always the victims. But what good would warning do? none at all. It will be interesting to watch this little play with the key I possess. I must not put my little lady on her guard against me by cold looks, for that would mar the plot. Really, I am getting more than I expected from this trip in the mountains."

Arthur Lowe went to his mother's room as usual, that night, but instead of falling at once into the confidential chat that the hour invited, his manner was abstracted. Mrs. Lowe, too, was pre-occupied, and presently spoke of Brooke, and her uneasiness on his account.

"I never believe," she said, "in wasting regrets upon anything that has been done with good intentions, and as it seemed, wisely, even if the consequences are not what could be desired, but I am sorely tempted to repent taking Grace to Rome."

"Alexandra would have been the sufferer if you had left Grace in Geneva," said Arthur.

"Yes, it would have added to her discomfort, poor child. But she could better have borne the added discipline of Grace's presence, than Brooke can endure the misery that seems inevitable."

"You are a gloomy prophet, mother," said Arthur. "I don't know what I would not do to make Brooke see Grace as I see her, but I should hate to admit for an instant that there is no chance of happiness for him, even in this delusion. Men have lived on such shams all their lives, and never repented it. I am beginning to hope he will win her, and I think he might if she were sure of his success."

"He only needs the help of a true, warm-hearted wife, to secure a noble future. But Grace is neither true nor affectionate, and I feel as though the saddest thing that could befall any man would be marrying her. Such women, in their selfish love of power, always rouse all that is least generous in a man's heart, instead of inspiring it with loftier feelings, as a true wo-

man must, even if she is loved in vain. But this is idle talk, since we can do nothing but hope for the best."

There was a pause, after which Mrs. Lowe said in an altered voice, and with deep tenderness in her look and in the pressure of her hand upon her son's, "And now, my dear child, will you let me give you a word of advice, and believe that it is not prompted by any doubt of you?"

Arthur assented, and his mother went on: "I have the most unbounded faith in your nice sense of honor, and yet I have feared that the warmth of your feelings, and the peculiar romance of your relations, might betray you into doing what I feel would not be wise. I mean that I would not have you tell Alexandra of your love, while you are travelling together."—Arthur sat silent, and his mother continued: "Under ordinary circumstances I would not say a word, and it pains me to feel obliged to put you on your guard, Arthur, for I know that nothing could be sweeter than to have your love-story begin in Switzerland, in this rarest of holidays. But I know that if I were Alexandra's mother, and had entrusted her to another's care, as she has been to mine by her aunt and uncle, I should feel it to be a breach of trust if she were not returned to me perfectly free. Besides," she added, after another pause, "I feel that the poor child has had so much to bear, so many sober, trying experiences during the past year or two, that this should be an absolute rest, a simple play-time. Let her have the sweet enjoyment that comes with unconscious, or unacknowledged love—being brightly, carelessly happy, as she is now; and when she is safely with her aunt again, you shall let her know, as soon as you like, what it is that has given the charm to Switzerland."

"You speak as though you had no doubts, mother," said Arthur. "If I had none, I could wait patiently. Again and again I have felt that I must speak, and hear the truth. Of course hope is stronger than doubt. Did you see her meeting with Mr. Hollister, mother?"

"No, my dear," Mrs. Lowe answered—and a sudden dread held her silent, while she thought over all she knew of the intercourse between Zandy and Stephen. "No," she added, greatly relieved by her survey, "and my dear boy, do not begin to torment yourself, like Brooke, with idle fears. You know that since Mr. Hollister left them, in the autumn, he has scarcely ever written to the Craigheds, and then Alexandra is such a child—such a thought has never entered her heart, I am sure, and will not until it is whispered by the true magician. I would not have you unduly confident, my son," she added,

with a smile, "but I cannot doubt that you will gain your heart's desire."

"What shall I do if I lose it?" demanded Arthur, in a stifled tone.

"Bear it bravely—suffer and be strong, my dear boy," said his mother, her voice full of earnest sympathy, "but"—and the confidence in her voice was contagious—"I believe that I shall prove a true prophet, and I predict happiness for you and Alexandra."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

AFTER THE STORM.

THERE had been a good deal of talk about seeing the sun rise after the storm, and all, more or less cheerfully, had agreed that it was the thing to do; but apparently Mrs. Lowe and Zandy and Arthur were the only ones, of their party, who had the courage and energy to forsake their beds for the chilly air of that early hour out of doors; and they were amply repaid.

"We shall have to sail over this enchanted sea, above the buried valleys, and make a snow pass, if we wish to escape from this island," said Arthur, as they looked out upon the scene, transformed by the magic of the mist.

"It looks as serene and still as if it had lain so forever," said Zandy; does it seem as if it came in a night and could disappear so soon—be frightened away by a glance from the sun?"

"It is so silent and motionless, and yet one could almost fancy the noise of the waterfalls and mountain streams to be its surf, beating against the rocks."

"The towers of that fierce little Riffelhorn look blacker than ever, in contrast to all this silvery whiteness, and the Matterhorn seems more terribly grand," said Mrs. Lowe. "Look, my dears, there are fresh patches of snow on his gray sides; I suppose his majesty's icy breath and fierce looks frightened some of the raindrops, and they turned pale, and fainted and fell, and haven't revived yet."

"Oh!"—it was a general exclamation of wonder and delight from all beholders.

A rosy flame had suddenly shot from the east around to the west, touching every snowy peak, and lighting up even the sombre face of the Matterhorn. Little waves of mist, a moment before so still and white, leaped up to catch the welcome warmth, and floated away on rosy wings, as if glad to be released from the cold enchantment, and a faint flush of expectation crept over the waiting mountains and the silvery sea.

Suddenly, again, swiftly following his bright herald, the sun appeared, transfiguring all things with the splendor of his coming.

At the first touch of his radiant beams the silent sea began

to quiver and part, and to roll in rosy billows up the mountain sides, and to creep away through the rifts and along the glaciers, clinging in wreaths and sprays to the snowy heights, catching their hues of pale green and orange and rose. But when the sun had risen far above the mountains, and there was no more sea, rivers of mist still lingered in the narrow valleys, and the shadowy vapor crept among the woods along the hill-sides, and made countless rainbows of the sunbeams.

After the excitement had somewhat died away, Mr. Craighead came out with the air of a martyr, and joined his friends.

"You are too late, Uncle Johnston," said Zandy, laughing at his forlorn appearance. "You might as well have slept on, as to come down when the sun is three-quarters of an hour high."

"I sincerely wish I had; who could imagine the sun would get above the tops of these high mountains as early as this? Was it much to see?"

"It was *very* curious," Zandy replied, with a peculiar pronunciation and a rising inflection.

"Ah! really, *do* you tell me so?"—and may I ask what you three enterprising people are going to do till breakfast time?—not sit bolt upright on those wooden benches, winking to keep your eyes open."

"O Day, if I squander a wavelet of thee,
A mite of my twelve-hours' treasure,
The least of thy gazes or glances!"—

repeated Arthur aside to Zandy, while his mother said, "There is nothing to see now that cannot be enjoyed equally well two hours hence, and Alexandra and I, at least, will follow the example of other enterprising people, and retire to take another nap. I would advise you gentlemen to do the same."

"I shall, assuredly," Mr. Craighead replied, suppressing a yawn; "I am only sorry to have lost a valuable half-hour. No other sensation keeps pace in my consciousness, at this moment, with somnolence, except curiosity—that is devouring me; but even that must wait upon a nap."

"Curiosity?" repeated Zandy—"what are you curious about?—I cannot imagine;—you look at me as if I could satisfy it."

"You can, and you must, my dear niece," Mr. Craighead returned, in a solemn tone.

"Now *my* curiosity is dreadfully excited," cried Zandy, "and I know I shan't sleep a wink unless I know first what it is that you want to know."

"You can't know first; if *I* can wait, you certainly can," replied her uncle, turning away.

Zandy would have followed him, but as he reached the door Stephen Hollister met him. Mr. Craighead stopped to shake hands, and to ask after his health, and then went on, and Stephen came out.

"I hardly expected to find any one up so early," he said to Mrs. Lowe; "but the sunrise must have been well worth seeing. I am sorry I was not in time for it."

"It was glorious," Mrs. Lowe answered; "but as you were not in time, why did you not take the benefit of a longer rest, which you must greatly need; you look as if you had not slept at all."

Stephen did look haggard and hollow-eyed, and added to that was the severe burning he had received from the sun and snow; altogether he was but a sorry representative of himself. It was true that he had passed a nearly sleepless night, but he answered lightly: "When my eyes opened, a half hour ago, I found them indisposed to close again, so I got up."

"I suppose you don't know yet how your boys are, Mr. Hollister—what sort of a night Charlie passed?" Mrs. Lowe said.

"No; George was to let me know if he needed me, and I heard nothing. I looked in as I came by, and they were both sleeping soundly, which is a good sign. My only fear is that we may be detained here, and every day, now, is of importance to us. We shall have to shorten our programme to get through in the allotted time."

"Do you know, Mr. Hollister," Mrs. Lowe said, "that we were at the Imperial when you were at Des Alpes?—and that you went over the Mer de Glace the day we climbed the Breven?—and that you preceded us over the Tête Noir by only two days?"

"An odd alternation, was it not?" answered Stephen. "The chance meetings and missings that happen in travelling are surprising. We changed our plans at the last moment, being urged to do so by some friends of the Leightons, who had just been over this ground. We did intend to go from here by the Theodule Pass into Italy—only as far as Milan, of course, at this season, but I fear we must give it up."

"That will be a pity," said Mrs. Lowe, and added, "We were just talking of going to our rooms as you came down, Mr. Hollister. We shall see you again at breakfast."

"Watching a thunder-storm at night, and a sunrise the next morning on the Riffelberg, is a pretty severe test of one's powers of endurance, Miss Craighead," said Stephen.

Zandy had been standing, apparently absorbed in looking at the mountains, and turned, when Stephen spoke to her, with a sudden motion that made the hood of her dark blue waterproof fall back, and disclose her bright hair, gathered in a careless mass of tumbled braids. The rosy color flashed over her face, and instead of replying, she drew the hood hastily over her head again, and, with a smile and a nod, ran into the house, followed by Mrs. Lowe. Arthur went soon after, and Stephen walked back and forth across the platform, apparently regardless of the existence of mountains, for half an hour or more, and then went upstairs to the Leightons' room, to see if they were awake, and if there were the shadow of a chance of their going as far as St. Niklaus that day.

He was coming from the dining-room an hour or two later, when Mrs. Lowe and most of her party entered. They exchanged greetings, and passed on, and Mrs. Forsyth proceeded with her animated discourse to Mrs. Lowe:

"No, my dear, I haven't the heart to let the poor man go down alone; it would seem positively inhuman; and neither have I the heart to ask him to wait, even if it would do any good, which it wouldn't; not a wink of sleep!—except sitting straight up in his bed!"

"I am very sorry to lose you, but I suppose there is really no help for it," Mrs. Lowe replied.

"I don't wish you to hurry down—remember that, my dear. The Mont Cervin is as comfortable a hotel as this, every bit, and I shall have a fine time resting and seeing the people. I only wish we were safely down; I have a mind to blindfold myself. But dear me! what is that precipitous mountain-side to the frightful pass from St. Niklaus to Visp?—a mere shelf in the side of a perpendicular rock thousands of feet high—thousands of feet above you and thousands of feet below you, and those most vicious of animals to carry you, that persist in hanging their tails over the side!—oh dear, dear!—and now and then taking a look at the roaring torrent, so awfully far down! Well, I shall just hold my umbrella before me, as I did coming—except when I looked to see where my mule's tail and nose were—and trust to Providence. I suppose we can be taken safely over a shelf two feet wide, on an obstinate mule's back, as well as kept from being struck by lightning, and all the other things. My dear Alexandra, was the sunrise fine?"

"Yes, indeed, Mrs. Forsyth, it was very beautiful."

"I wish I could have seen it without waking up, but I do suppose I was having my first quiet sleep—now, my dear husband," she exclaimed, in answer to an equivocal sound from

Mr. Forsyth, "you *know* I never sleep when you are troubled for breath. Don't be too strict with the young people, my dear," she said in a whisper to Mrs. Lowe, after taking an admiring, tender survey of the young faces around them.

"Only let them have a good time, my dear, and don't worry about their love affairs. I would just keep my eyes shut, and not see anything that goes on. To think that I haven't seen the dear Leighton boys and Mr. Hollister, except for a word! Have them join us, my dear! how beautiful that would be! I wonder if there would be any danger of duels?" she added, gazing at Grace and Zandy.

Soon after breakfast the Forsyths took their departure in *chaises à porteurs*. Their friends then dispersed to prepare for climbing the Gorner Grat, which was the excursion for the day.

Zandy hurried down as soon as she was ready, and found Mr. Craighead, as she had hoped, sitting outside, smoking. She seated herself beside him, saying, "Now, Uncle Johnston, tell me what it is that you are so curious about—quick! before the others come."

Mr. Craighead took two or three leisurely puffs at his cigar, and then said: "Do you agree to satisfy my curiosity?"

"Perhaps I can't."

"You *can*."

Zandy looked puzzled.

"What can it be? I can't think of anything—that I know—that you could care to know—that I shouldn't be willing to tell you—and curiosity is so painful—yes, I agree."

"What has Grace had to do with a Count?—What desperate affair did she have in Geneva?"

Zandy gazed at her uncle in open-eyed astonishment.

"What makes you think?"—

"That there was any Count and any affair in Geneva—a bird of the air told me, and also intimated that you could tell me all about it."

"I cannot—at least I—*will not*," said Zandy, the color deepening in her cheeks, and her lips closing firmly.

"If you don't tell me I shall ask somebody else, for I must know!"

"Why must you know?" demanded Zandy.

"Because I wish to, my dear niece, and I like to have my wishes gratified. Is this the way you keep your promises?"

"I was very silly to make a promise, and you are very silly to be so curious."

"Remember the bears that ate up the children, and don't be disrespectful to your venerable uncle; but just answer the ques-

tions I will now propound, in a meek and becoming manner. What was the Count's name?"

"I—don't know."

"Don't know?"

"He had several—at least, more than one."

"Ah!—did he visit Grace at home?"

"No."

"Met by chance, the usual way'; and he made love to her, attracted solely by her pretty face, of course?"

"Was he handsome?"

"Grace thought so."

"Did she think he was rich?"

"Yes—but she loved him, or thought she did."

"I dare say she did—as she is able. How did it happen that"—

"There are Mrs. Lowe and Mr. Donovan?" cried Zandy, starting up; "we must not keep them waiting."

"Sit down; Grace and Mr. Lowe are not here yet.—She consented to marry him—the little bird told me that much—what prevented her doing so?—did she repent at the last moment?"

"No—we went to the church and stopped it."

"Whom do you mean by *we*?"

"Mr. Forsyth and Mrs. Lowe and I."

"Who found out that the marriage was about to take place?"

"I did; Grace left a note."

"Asking you to come after her and rescue her?"

Zandy laughed in spite of herself. "No, saying she was gone."

"She was very grateful to you, however?"

"Not then—I presume she has been since."

"You saved her for new conquests; as the wife of a bogus count, her career would have been nipped in the bud. I think it was a waste of time and pains, though."

"I don't think so," returned Zandy gravely.

"Do you defend her?" Mr. Craighead asked.

"I think there was great excuse for her; she was very miserable in Geneva, and then, because of her early education, I suppose, she has different ideas of such things."

"Does Aunt Louisa know about the escapade?"

"No; nobody does, except the Lowes and Forsyths, and now you—how did you hear of it, Uncle Johnston?"

"It only surprises me that I had not heard of it before—such a lovely piece of gossip! how could you keep it?—young ladies are so fond of regaling their friends with such rare-bits—and this was such a *very* rare bit."

"How shameful, Uncle Johnston," cried Zandy, with crimson cheeks and flashing eyes. "If you had lived at home all this time, instead of being away by yourself, you would't have got into such bad, cynical ways of thinking and speaking. If you don't respect me, you might remember grandma and Aunt Edith."

"I said *young* ladies," replied Johnston, meekly.

"Well, Aunt Edith is young, and grandma was young once, and so was Mrs. Lowe."

"I take it all back, and humbly apologize," said Mr. Craighead, lifting his hat, and Zandy saw that it was not in mockery, though it was done with an air of drollery. "How did you keep it from Aunt Louisa, though? that puzzles me," he said.

"We never could have done it, if she had not been confined to her room for those few days; it was so fortunate!"

"The shock would have been too much for her delicate nerves; it was so fortunate that you could bear it alone!—You must have enjoyed Geneva; why did you never enlarge upon, or even hint at the pleasures you were experiencing, in your letters to me? Were you very sorry to lose Grace when she went to Rome!"

"No, I wasn't at all sorry."

"Strange! Do you think she cares for Mr. Donovan?"

"I don't know;—I am afraid he cares for her."

"Afraid? don't you think he would win a prize if he won her?"

Zandy shook her head soberly, and at that moment Stephen appeared.

Mr. Craighead joined him as he stood near Mrs. Lowe, saying, "I hope your patient is better by this time, Mr. Hollister!"

"He is, decidedly, though he seems languid still."

"Then perhaps you will join us in our tramp this morning, if you are not disabled yourself by yesterday's exertions."

"I cannot plead actual disability, but I am rather stiff and unwieldy, and believe I must decline. I hope you will all enjoy the Gornet Grat."

"What have you done with *Cræsus*, as you call him?"—Arthur asked, aside, of Brooke;—"I thought he seemed disposed to join us."

"He was; but I ignored his hints. I only hope he will take *my* hints, confound him!"

Grace appeared presently; she returned Stephen's quiet "Good morning" with graceful nonchalance, and very soon the party were fairly off. As Stephen paced back and forth on the platform, he saw that for a time they all walked together,

and then, as the path narrowed, fell into twos and twos—Zandy and Mr. Lowe first, then Mr. Craighead and Mrs. Lowe, Grace and Mr. Donovan bringing up the rear.

When he went up to the Leightons' room, which was not until an hour or two later, he found Charlie still in bed, and George just finishing a letter to his mother.

"We must take a tramp some time to-day, to keep in training," Stephen said, "and you must hurry up, Charlie; we must get away from here by the day after to-morrow."

"When are the Lowes and their party going?" asked George.

"To-morrow, I believe."

"I wish they would wait and go with us; it would be jolly to travel with them. What pretty girls those are! everybody was talking about them at the table when I was at breakfast, and I felt like knocking down two or three of those confounded—aw—snobs for speaking of their being so quiet and well-bred, as if it was something to wonder at!—the idea! I looked daggers at them, and I think they saw pretty plainly how my fists were aching to pummel them, for they hushed up."

"They must have been awfully frightened," said Charlie, with a laugh.

"Better look out, old fellow, or I'll try my fists on you. I say, can't you get on your climbing legs by to-morrow, so that we can go down with them?"

"We can't join the Lowes," said Stephen; "they travel in carriages whenever they can, and stop often; and when we start again we must push on rapidly; another important consideration is, that we haven't been invited to join them. You will have to content yourself with Charlie and me as a party."

"A very poor substitute for two pretty girls and two nice old ladies and two or three jolly fellows. Which do you think is the prettier of the young ladies, Mr. Hollister?"

"Miss Craighead."

"Do you, really? Now I think Miss Gellert is; she's a perfect little fairy, and she has such killing ways. I suppose Miss Craighead's eyes are the finest, and she has glorious hair, and no mistake; but Miss Gellert has a way of opening her blue eyes on a fellow that makes him"—a derisive laugh from Charlie made George stop suddenly. "I believe I stand the least bit in awe of Miss Craighead, and I guess it's because Mrs. Forsyth praised her up so in Paris, and made her out such a heroine. What a shame it would have been if that nice little thing had married a villain of a make-believe French Count. Miss Craighead ought to be canonized for saving her."

"It would have served her right if she had married him,"

Charlie declared. "If you're not careful, if you get intimate with her, you'll let it all out about Mrs. Forsyth's telling us, and that would be beautiful," said Charlie.

"You needn't be afraid; I am in no more danger of letting it out than you are, though you are such a grandfather.—I just wish you hadn't been such a goose as to get used up."

"If he hadn't, we should be on our way to Visp to-day," said Stephen.

"Well—no offence—but when I come to Switzerland again, I shall look out for a party with ladies in it."

"I would, if I were you," Stephen returned, as he left the room to go to his own.

He sat down to write a letter, but had got no farther than the date, and "My dear mother," when he threw down his pen, and taking his hat and alpen-stock, left the house.

He crossed the uneven plateau that stretched towards the west, keeping on until he came to the steep descent, covered with dwarf pines, that led down to the glacier; turned back, over a grassy hill that overlooked the Riffelhorn, and crossing the path that led to the Gorner Grat, walked on and up, with little thought of what, or how much he was doing, until he found himself on a rough height, and was glad to sit down in the shade of a huge pile of stones that crowned the summit.

How long he had been there, dividing his attention between the special subjects that claimed his thoughts, and the superb views of the Zermatt valley and the glorious snow-peaks beyond, he could not have told, when he heard voices, at a distance but clearly coming nearer. He moved quietly to the other side of his stone screen and lay still, listening and waiting, devoutly hoping that his solitude would not be invaded. The voices grew more distinct, and presently he heard a sweet clear voice say,

"You can sit there, then, and wait for me—such laziness!"

A man's voice replied from below the crown of the hill; a merry laugh followed, and soon light steps trod among the loose, flat stones, that so strangely marked the isolated place. The footsteps drew nearer, and suddenly stopped; and then Stephen's eyes fell upon his feet, stretched out before him and quite likely to be fully in view, while his head was safely hidden. So he got up and presented himself to Zandy's astonished gaze. He did not speak at once, but looked at her, as she stood with glowing cheeks and dilated eyes, and smiled a little as he saw that in each hand she held a large stone.

Her eyes fell then, the glow spread over her face and throat, and she threw down one of the stones with an impatient motion.

"You look at me just as you used to when I had behaved badly in school," she exclaimed, half turning away, and with a consciousness that her embarrassment had made her say what was not strictly true.

"Do I?" Stephen answered gently. "I am sorry to remind you of the times when I was disagreeable."—Zandy looked at him, and uttered a little exclamation of remonstrance, but he went on: "Our relations changed long ago: you became the teacher and I the scholar. I suppose you were quite startled at seeing a pair of feet, apparently belonging to this cairn," he said, suddenly assuming a light tone and manner. "I reminded myself of an ostrich, conceiving myself invisible because I could see nothing."

"I was astonished, and was on the point of running away when you appeared," Zandy replied, throwing off her embarrassment. "The rest all went down the way we came up; I wanted to explore this hill, and Mr. Lowe was coming with me, but he found his mother was very tired, so he went with her, and I made Uncle Johnston come with me—poor man! he declared he wouldn't, but he did."

"What specimen have you there?" asked Stephen, pointing to the one Zandy still held.

"I picked it up on the Gorner Grat; isn't it a pretty color? I am going to crack it—I don't care to keep the whole of it. I forgot my little book to-day, and these dear little things are withering: I am afraid I shan't be able to press them," and she looked regretfully at her flowers, and then with a half shy, half defiant, wholly graceful air, she knelt and placed her specimen on a flat stone, and looked for a suitable one to break it with.

"You had better put your flowers in my note-book for the present, and so save them," Stephen said, offering his book.

"Oh! thanks!"

"Let me do that for you," said Stephen, kneeling beside her.

"No; I know just where to strike it to have it break in nice smooth pieces."

"Very well."

It was not "very well," for Zandy struck her thumb instead of the green stone, and it was cruelly bruised. The color fled from her face, and the exceeding pain forced the tears from her eyes.

Stephen was speechless and motionless, for a moment, but when he saw the red drops trickling down between the fingers that held the bruised thumb, he pulled out a handkerchief, and tearing off a strip, he took Zandy's unresisting hand, and saying,

"Poor little thumb!" proceeded to bind it up with the utmost care. When he had finished, Zandy smiled, and said it was beautifully done.

"Those fingers should be bound up, too, as we have no water;" Stephen said, seeing Zandy look deprecatingly at the other hand, and he took other strips, and wound them around the unwounded fingers; then Zandy laughed, though she was still very pale and had some trouble to keep the tears back; and she looked at the flowers as if now there was nothing to do but let them wither.

"If you will let me unfasten them I will press them for you," Stephen said; and as Zandy did not demur, he took the drooping blossoms from her dress, and laying them down beside him, opened his note-book; "I have a few little things here," he said—"see."

"What *are* they?"—not the edelweiss that I have been looking for everywhere and never could find?"

"Yes, it is the edelweiss; odd little creatures, are they not?"

"Dear little things," said Zandy, softly, gazing intently at them; "daintily little princesses, dressed in ermine to keep them warm, while they blossom in the snow, to make even the cold seem kind and friendly. What are you doing?" she cried, as Stephen, having opened his knife, began to cut his note-book.

"Taking out these useless leaves."

"They are not useless; are they not notes of your journey?"

"Yes, but it isn't easy to transfer flowers after they are pressed, and you must keep the rest of the book, if you will."

Zandy looked on almost in silence, while Stephen skilfully arranged her dainty little pink and blue and white souvenirs of the rugged Gorner Grat. When the last was disposed, he relieved Zandy's fear lest he intended to leave all the edelweiss blossoms in the book, by turning back to them, and saying, "There are four of these 'ermine-clad princesses,' and I will give you two of them if you will give me one of the gentians, and one of those white stars."

Zandy shook her head. "That wouldn't be a fair exchange."

"Then you shall have the four," Stephen returned, in a cool, business-like tone.

"You know I didn't mean that," cried Zandy, indignantly. "Don't you care for any of the others, or for all?"

"I only care for these two."

"You can have them; I am very glad to have the edelweiss," she said, and Stephen quietly took possession of his treasures and put them in an old letter.

"What do you think of Switzerland?" he asked, when he had clasped the remains of the note-book and put it in his pocket, promising to deliver it when they reached the hotel.

"What do I think of Switzerland?" repeated Zandy, with an exploring look into his face, that strongly reminded him of old times.

He answered her look with one of his rare, bright smiles. At the same moment Mr. Craighead's voice was heard calling to Zandy. She responded with a perfect imitation of the "*ranz des vaches*," her voice ringing out clear and sweet on the still air, and at a make-believe imitation in answer, in a cracked, quivering falsetto, Zandy laughed heartily, and she mimicked that in her turn, as she and Stephen made their way over the stones, and down to where Mr. Craighead lay enjoying the sunshine. He watched them as they came down the rocks, and rose leisurely when they were within a few steps of his resting-place.

"I thought I heard voices once or twice," he said, "and have waited amidst hope and fear; and you can but faintly imagine my relief at beholding this rash maiden safe in the convoy of a friend like you, Mr. Hollister. But what do I see? have you really had an encounter with some malicious gnome or goblin, and did Mr. Hollister rescue you?"

Zandy's account of her mishap was in keeping with her uncle's suggestion.

When they came within view of the house, they saw Mr. Lowe coming towards them. Zandy joined him when they met, and he walked back beside her, listening to her merry account of her adventures—she did not speak of the flowers—which her uncle interrupted often with versions of his own. Arthur sympathized with her wounded thumb, but his attempts at entering into her gayety were rather unsuccessful; and he was disposed to be very suspicious of the little book which Stephen delivered to her at the door. He recovered his spirits somewhat, however, when Stephen left them with a formal bow; and when he found that at dinner he sat quite apart from Zandy, and that she never once looked at him, he recovered altogether.

Immediately after dinner, Stephen and George went off on a tramp, from which they did not return till it was nearly dark; and then Stephen went to his room to write letters, and was seen no more.

The next morning, while the party were gradually gathering on the platform, the whole house being pervaded with the air of bustle denoting departures, Stephen stood, for a time, beside Mrs. Lowe and Zandy.

"I hope you will have no more drawbacks, Mr. Hollister," Mrs. Lowe said—"no more detentions from any cause; and we shall hope to hear of your safe arrival in America, in due time."

"I shall regard your kind wishes as auguries of our good fortune," answered Stephen.

Everybody was sufficiently sorry to leave the Riffel, but Zandy was the heaviest-hearted of all. The blue sky and the sunshine and the glistening snow-peaks seemed dull to her—had lost their charms for the time, and her foot had lost its lightness. With every step that took them further from the gray summit, she felt more keenly wretched, saying to herself that she could not bear to leave that glorious place and never see it again—until the climax of her desolation was reached: which came when the gray summit was hid from view, the bare expanse of the mountain-side stretched above them, and they began to wind through the woods.

But their wealth of beauty, the wild music of waterfalls, seen and unseen, and the glimpses of radiant blue and glistening white through the trees, were cheering influences she could not long resist, and before they had emerged from the "Pine Copse," at the foot of the mountain, and came out upon the grassy path that lay along the rushing river—the Matterhorn still towering above them—she had ceased to wonder how she had found Switzerland so enchanting; and before they had reached the hotel, and received Mrs. Forsyth's warm welcome, she had put her sadness, as the young and hopeful can, away in some secret corner of her heart, and could talk and laugh with the merriest, though her laugh would, every now and then, end in a sigh. She did look wistfully back, too, at the lovely "Pine Copse," and think how she should like to have a solitary ramble in search of flowers and waterfalls.

Mrs. Forsyth was overjoyed to see her friends.

"My dears," she said, when she had enlarged upon her loneliness, and given graphic descriptions of her diversions—"my young dears, I mean, for I don't expect Mrs. Lowe to approve, altogether, of what I've done—I have secured an acquisition to our party! I know *you* won't object, and she ought not," she added, with a merry nod at her friend, "for it was a real act of mercy; only think of a young man traveling all by himself, far from friends and home! Then he was so gentlemanly, and of most excellent family—I know of his family; and, my dears, he is *e-nor-mously* rich;"—Grace smiled to herself, but looked innocent and unsuspecting; Mr. Donovan frowned and muttered "Cresus" in Grace's ear; Zandy was not half attending

to what was being said, and Mrs. Lowe showed no signs of the annoyance she felt.—“Well, he was here by himself, as I said, looking quite forlorn, and I talked with him and found out about his family; and I liked him so much that I asked him to join our party, when they come down from the mountain, and he brightened up wonderfully, and said he had met them up there, and he should be most happy: he was intending to take just our route, over the Vispenthal. So—hush! there he comes now with Mr. Craighead. I needn't introduce you, need I?”

Dinner was soon announced, and not long after, the party, with Mrs. Forsyth's “acquisition,” were in carriages, on their way to St. Niklaus, disposed, on the whole, to general satisfaction.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

CONTRASTS.

AT Visp a council was held, which resulted in a departure from the original plan. The Forsyths were tired of traveling, and decided to go directly back to Vevay, and await their friends there. The rest of the party, including Mrs. Forsyth's “acquisition,” whose society she bequeathed to them with secret hopes of what “might come of it,” concluded to go over the Gemmi Pass, instead of to the Rhone Glacier.

They spent a night at Visp, and the next day proved perfect for the full enjoyment of the drive to Leukerbad, with its endless variety of charms. The snowpeaks crowned all, resting against the blue sky in matchless whiteness and infinite serenity, making the sunny verdure of the nearer mountains, with their rounded outlines and constantly changing groupings, their “hanging gardens” and clinging hamlets, brighter and warmer by contrast. The delicious, dreamy beauty of the Baden Valley surely never was surpassed; to lose sight of it seemed like “leaving peace and happiness and heart's desires behind one,” as Mr. Craighead dismally said, in mimicry of Zandy's lamentations. Then there were the vine-clad slopes, the green fields, the glancing waterfalls and swift streams, the dense, shady woods, and the glimpses into the dark grandeur of the Dala Gorge, and at length the magnificent towering rocks that—like mighty walls built of Titan fragments, pillars, towers, pinnacles, domes, cathedral fronts, castle turrets, all massed together in stupendous array—guarded the quiet little Leukerbad Valley.

For two nights by “pale moonlight,” and a day—Sunday—in alternating sunlight and shadow, were the wonders and beauties of the valley enjoyed; and then, under gray skies, the party mounted their mules, or took their alpen-stocks, and made their way, preceded by herds of goats with tinkling bells, across the rough bit of meagre woodland that intervened, to the base of the rock, seamed and rifted, up which their path led—“Two thousand feet of perpendicular impossibility,” Mr. Craighead had declared it to be, on its being pointed out from the hotel.

Its mystery opened before them step by step, so steeply that even Mrs. Lowe was glad to forsake her mule, and take to her feet and alpen-stock before they had gone far. Grace grew pale and breathless, declaring that she should never reach the top, and at length seemed in such keen terror of the lengthening precipice, which made the steadiest nerves quail a little, that Mr. Donovan peremptorily insisted upon her taking his arm.

Having reached the summit of the rocky pass, they stopped to rest and enjoy the magnificent view of mountains and valleys that lay behind them; and when they started on Grace had skilfully freed herself from Brooke's attentions, and he walked moodily beside Zandy and Arthur, who, with a secret sympathy in his unhappiness, often tacitly united their powers of diversion in his behalf, and now would not leave him to his dismal thoughts.

The path, at first, lay across a rocky plateau. Rugged heights rose on every side, with only patches of snow to relieve their sombre hue, and in the midst was a lake, whose waters looked cold and dreary enough to be the burial-place of blighted hopes and unfulfilled wishes. Nothing could surpass the desolate grandeur of the scene, and to add the last touch of dreariness, a dull rain began to fall from the gray skies. It seemed so in keeping with the general tone that no one thought to wonder, but put on whatever he or she possessed in the way of protection, and bore the discomfort with due philosophy.

They ate their lunch under the shelter of the lonely little inn, the Schwarenbach—the sole token of human existence in all that grand solitude.

Soon after their leaving the inn the rain ceased; the gray plateau and the snows were behind them, and the path began to wind around forest-clad mountains, and along a deep, wild gorge, on the farther side of which rose other mighty, green mountain-sides; and far down, in the narrow, rocky bed, fiercely plunged a torrent, unseen, but seeming to claim the Pass with its thundering voice.

It happened that Mr. Craighead had joined Mrs. Lowe, whose mule headed the procession, and Arthur had fallen back beside Zandy. Brooke walked with them, or moodily on by himself; Grace and her cavalier came leisurely after. And it happened that at a certain place a grassy slope jutted abruptly out over the gorge, and Zandy held her breath with horror at seeing Brooke spring carelessly down the steep bank, and walk to the edge of the slope, and lean forward to look below, until it seemed as if he must lose his balance.

Arthur, seeing her distress, shouted to him angrily, and

Brooke turned with a careless laugh, saying, as he came back to them, "It is tremendous!—why! did I frighten you, Miss Alexandra?" he cried, noticing Zandy's white face, and with a hasty glance back at Grace, who looked quite unconcerned; "I am very sorry. It was safe enough; and really, one needs to look down like that to appreciate the tremendousness of the thing. Won't you try it? you needn't be afraid; Arthur and I can hold you."

Zandy hesitated, but she had been longing, before Brooke tried it, to see into the mysteries of the gorge. Her uncle and Mrs. Lowe were out of sight, and Arthur seconded Brooke's proposal. So she let them lift her from her mule, and each holding a hand, they led her carefully to the edge of the awful precipice, and she gazed down—down—below the jagged rocks, and the patches of stunted firs that braved the terrors of the place, into the thundering torrent, that in a frenzy of imprisoned power, foamed and raged against the opposing rocks, and plunged furiously onward.

Her heart beat exultingly, and for an instant she lost consciousness of herself and her companions.

It was only for an instant; a word of caution from Brooke recalled her to herself, and with a sudden horror of the terrible verge, she started back, letting Arthur and Brooke see her frightened eyes. Blaming themselves for their temerity, they led her up the slope; but Brooke's self-condemnation was suddenly checked by seeing that Grace's companion had lifted her from her saddle, and holding her hand, was smilingly encouraging her to follow her friend's example.

Brooke strode up to them, exclaiming in excited tones, "Grace! what do you mean? would you trust yourself in such a place with *him*?"—and turning fiercely upon the young man—"How dare you presume to take her into such danger?"

The young man politely released Grace's hand, and stepped aside, saying coolly, "Pardon! I was not aware"—

"What do *you* mean, Mr. Donovan?" cried Grace, indignantly; "I have a right to choose my friends. You shall not dictate to me. Will you take me now?" she asked, holding out her hand to the young man, who stood carelessly resting his arm on her saddle.

He slowly withdrew his arm, saying, with a deprecating look at Brooke, "Certainly, nothing could give me greater pleasure, Miss Gellert; but perhaps, under the circumstances"—

"There are no 'circumstances,'" cried Grace. "If you will not take me, I shall go by myself," and she took a step towards the bank.

"That I cannot allow," exclaimed the young man, coming to her side. "Mr. Donovan will absolve me from intentional usurpation of his rights."

With a perfectly colorless face and glowing eyes, Brooke bowed, and Grace gave her hand again to the young man, who carefully helped her down the bank; but before they were half-way to the edge of the precipice, Brooke was beside them, and seizing Grace's arm, drew her away, with a shuddering horror in his look and tone.

"Grace," he cried, "I cannot bear it; have pity—spare me the agony of seeing you go to that awful verge without me. Come away—you shall!" he cried, with sudden fierceness; and catching her in his arms, he carried her back into the path, and set her down, and stood looking at her with quivering lips and hungry eyes, while she, flushed with surprise, half pleased, half angry, seemed hardly to know whether to laugh or cry.

"Grace," Brooke said, after a brief silence, his voice full of pleading tenderness, "forgive me, and have pity, and don't send me away. My heart is breaking for some of the kindness you lavish on that man, who cares nothing for you."

Poor Brooke! those last words sealed his fate, as far as any present comfort went, for they touched Grace's sensitive vanity.

"He should see," she thought, "whether *that man* cared nothing for her."

With an imperious gesture of her head and hand, she said, "No, I will not forgive you. You have been rude, and made yourself and me ridiculous, and I will keep my kindness to myself, if nobody cares for it, as you say."

She turned from him with a scornful smile that nearly froze his blood, and walked haughtily to her mule's side. Brooke started forward, involuntarily, to help her to mount, but she drew back, and the young man, who had watched the scene from a little distance, hearing nothing, but struck with the spirit and grace of Miss Gellert's bearing, obeyed the summons of her lovely eyes, though with some hesitation on Brooke's account, and lifted her to her seat with an air of gallant devotion.

Brooke gave Grace a look which, if she had seen, she was not likely soon to forget, and walked away with unsteady steps. Arthur and Zandy, who had been pained and spell-bound witnesses of the scene, joined him and the three walked on together.

The lavishment of mosses and ferns and flowers, and delicate trailing vines, that clothed the lofty mountain-sides with such exquisite beauty, constant reminders that the Greatest can and does care for the smallest, under happier circumstances would

have given Zandy the intensest pleasure; but now that everything was shadowed, she could only make their loveliness, in its marvellous varieties, a help in their efforts at cheerful conversation.

They overtook Mrs. Lowe and Mr. Craighead after a time, when the gorge was left behind and apparently forgotten, and notwithstanding all secret causes for disquiet, it was a tolerably merry party that descended the steep, winding path, with abrupt, frowning heights above, and a wild mountain torrent below, and came suddenly upon the valley, lying peacefully between two grand, solemn lines of hills. Their comfortable little hotel stood just at the foot of the path; the abrupt rocky heights almost overshadowed it. The torrent dashed riotously by on the other side of the road, but the peacefulness of the valley was not ruffled by its deafening roar.

Brooke was the last to make his appearance at dinner, and his face perceptibly brightened, as Zandy gladly noticed, when he saw that Grace was seated between her and Mr. Craighead. His seat was opposite, and he had full opportunity to watch her; and his heart ached with tenderness, and grew lighter, too, as he saw how pale and pensive she was. He tried to catch her eye, hoping to find there some token that she was thinking kindly of him; but she would not look at him; he only had the satisfaction of seeing that she looked at no one else.

"Do you know, friends, that there is a wonderful little gorge within a stone's throw of us?" asked Mr. Lowe.

"Is there really?" asked Zandy eagerly. "Can we see it to-night?"

"It is only across the meadow, look—behind that mountain-wall; mine host pointed out the entrance to me. We can easily see it, if you are not too tired. 'I am afraid you are.'"

"I can answer for myself," said Mrs. Lowe, "that I have done quite enough for one day, and Grace does not look equal to any further exertions. Would it not be better to save the gorge for to-morrow?"

"It may rain," suggested Zandy, demurely.

"You are irrepressible and insatiable, Alexandra," said her uncle.

"Nothing could be lovelier, I know, than a gorge with this soft golden light through it," she added with a playfully appealing look at Mrs. Lowe.

Mrs. Lowe smiled; "Well, if you are not too tired, and can get anybody to go with you"—

"She can, mother; I am at your service, Miss Craighead."

While the others were talking, Brooke had leaned over to-

wards Grace, saying in a low, pleading voice, "Will you not go with me, Grace?—it isn't far."

She opened her eyes upon him like bright sapphires, and answered coldly, "Thank you, I don't care to walk to-night."

Mr. Craighead, who was fully cognizant of the state of things, without having witnessed the scene in the Pass, heard and saw, and said to himself, "What fools love makes of us!—a little cool indifference, and a few devotions to Alexandra, would bring her to terms. I'll help the poor fellow to give her a dose of wholesome neglect."

A little skilful management effected his purpose.

"Where is the so-called Croesus?" asked he, as Brooke walked through the little garden with him half an hour later, on their way to the gorge; "is he not going to give us the light of his countenance in our walk?"

"I made the inquiry of him," replied Brooke, "and learned that he preferred to smoke his cigar in peace and quietness on the piazza."

The last thing Brooke saw, when they had crossed the meadow and were turning the sharp corner of rock that marked the entrance to the ravine, was Grace's fair head at an upper window; he thought she waved a little hand to him; he could not be sure, at that distance, but he lingered behind to lift his hat, and but for shame, would have gone back for a possible word or look of tenderness.

"This is a cheerful, lightsome gorge, compared with the awful Dala, isn't it?" said Zandy, as she and Arthur walked up the narrow path, beside the noisy torrent.

Grim, rocky walls towered above them, crowned by dark evergreens, and huge boulders lay all along, in the bed of the torrent and beside it, as if hurled from the far heights by giant hands. But the blue sky smiled down upon them, and golden clouds dropped their radiance as they floated over; and the turbulent waters dashed down the rocks, more as if in boisterous frolic, than as if fiercely chafing against their narrow bounds.

"I am afraid you will always think sorrowfully of the Gemmi Pass," said Arthur, in answer to Zandy's comment.

"No—I don't think I shall," Zandy replied, with some hesitation; and she added impulsively, "If I could only know that Mr. Donovan was happy!—Oh, dear! what a dreadful thing it is for one human being to have the power to make another suffer so!"

With a sudden chagrin at having referred so directly to a subject that had been tacitly avoided, both by Arthur and his

mother, she blushed, and stopped to exclaim at a place where the rocks were heaped up together in the bed of the stream in wild confusion, making miniature cataracts, boiling cauldrons, whirlpools, and deep, still basins; and Brooke and Mr. Craighead overtook them before they moved on again.

At the top of the gorge they came suddenly out into a quiet little valley. It was completely shut in by lofty precipitous heights, gray with debris at their base, and green with hardy firs and pines towards their far summits. Waterfalls, like silver ribbons hung from the heights, wavered down, and, seemingly lost among the trees and debris, gathered all, at last, in the quiet brook that crept through the grass, adding its music to the charms of the wonderful place; a quiet brook it was, contented with its valley-home, until it found the way out, and then, in a sudden wild gladness, it dashed over the rocks and down the gorge, and was a murmuring brook no more, but the roaring torrent.

A picturesque little bridge crossed the stream, in the midst; and beyond it, close under the shadow of the great rocks, almost hidden among the trees that on that side lent the variety of their summer verdure, stood a little Chalet, that Zandy declared to be the home of the Rasselas of this "Happy Valley."

Brooke repeated, half to her, and half to himself:

"Heavy vapors coldly hover
Round the vale I cannot flee:
Outlet could I but discover,
Blessed were release to me.
Ever green in fair dominion,
Yonder hill-tops I survey;
Thither—could I find the pinion—
Thither would I wing my way."

He turned from her while he repeated the last lines, and walked towards the gorge, and Mr. Craighead sauntered after him, hoping to detain him longer in the valley. But Brooke had grown too restless for endurance; and as he persisted in going back, Mr. Craighead went with him, inwardly amused at the part he was playing of "Mentor to a love-lorn Telemachus;" but he was genuinely concerned for Brooke's welfare.

The golden light had already faded; and by the time they reached the foot of the gorge the mountains had lost their purple hues, and on the other side of the valley loomed like vast walls of tangible darkness, and the valley itself was fast growing shadowy and dim. The first faint glimmer of moonlight mingled with the deepening twilight, and still the noisy

torrent rioted on, undaunted by the mystery of the coming night.

As they crossed the meadow, Brooke eagerly watched Grace's window, and seeing nothing but blank darkness within, he was seized with feverish fears that she had not been safely resting all the time—resting and thinking of him. As they entered the little garden gate, behind the hotel, a sudden joy flooded his heart at the thought of seeing her alone, and winning from her the confessions and assurances he longed for—longed for so desperately that he could have braved fire and flood to obtain them. She was always gentle and loving when they were alone; but those, to Brooke, blissful moments, were very rare.

They walked around through the garden, and across the piazza, but finding only strangers, Brooke went into the house.

Mr. Craighead lighted a cigar, and had settled himself to its quiet enjoyment, wondering lazily where and how Brooke would find his goddess, when he made his appearance.

"I can't find anybody," he said, "even Cræsus has disappeared."

"He is in his own room, communing with Morpheus, I dare say," answered Mr. Craighead.

Brooke turned away, and strolled moodily up the road, and was soon lost to Mr. Craighead's view behind the steep, wooded bank that led down to the torrent.

It might have been ten minutes before he reappeared, and even in the dim light Mr. Craighead could plainly discover, as he approached the house, signs of intense excitement. He paid no heed to Mr. Craighead's voice, but hurried across the piazza and into the house.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

WHAT WILL SHE DO WITH IT?

MR. CRAIGHEAD readily divined the truth, in a general way, respecting Brooke's speedy reappearance and agitation, and was not at all surprised at seeing two figures presently emerge from among the same trees and shadows. He watched them as they slowly approached the house, repeating to himself, while he smoked on meditatively:

"That fawn-skin-dappled hair of hers,
And the blue eye
Dear and dewy,
And that infantine fresh air of hers.

"But for loving, why, you would not, Sweet,
Though we prayed you,
Paid you, brayed you
In a mortar—for you could not, Sweet!"

"Oh!—where are all the others?" exclaimed Grace, as she and her cavalier came suddenly upon Mr. Craighead, sitting alone at the end of the piazza.

"My account of them will be a matter of conjecture, as I have not the gift of second sight: Alexandra and Mr. Lowe are on their way back from the 'Happy Valley;' Mrs. Lowe is still in her own room—Mr. Donovan in his."

"I didn't know—I thought—I wonder if Mrs. Lowe is in her own room?"

Grace found the cool gaze of Mr. Craighead's bright eyes disconcerting; and, with the implied excuse of seeking Mrs. Lowe, she disappeared, and her cavalier seated himself beside Mr. Craighead, who remarked that the evening was charming.

"Yes, extremely," was the response; and, after a pause—"I am afraid Mr. Donovan is laboring under a mistake."

"Indeed!—will you have a cigar?"

"Thank you."

"And a light?"

"Thanks."

"A mistake?"

"Yes—as to the little matter of my relations to Miss Gellert,

and hers to me. We have had our laugh over the absurdity of his delusion, but I am really very sorry to have been the means of annoying Mr. Donovan; I am afraid he takes it very much to heart."

"I fear he does," said Mr. Craighead, gravely.

"It happened, quite unfortunately, that at the moment of his coming upon us down by the stream, I was putting a ring on Miss Gellert's finger—one of her own rings—with a wish that we might meet again, or something equally unimportant. But, lover-like, he would not wait for an explanation, and left us, under an impression that I might have dispelled with a word, if he would have listened. The truth is, I could not put a ring, with any serious meaning, upon Miss Gellert's finger, as another lady already wears a diamond in token of my allegiance to her, and will wear a plain gold ring before Christmas, in token of hers to me."

"I am sure you have my sincere congratulations," said Mr. Craighead. "Does Miss Gellert know of your good fortune?"

"Certainly she does!—and I am sure it has been evident to everybody except Mr. Donovan, whom love makes blind, that she was only amusing herself, as pretty women are privileged to do."

"Undoubtedly."

"I might confess how deep an impression her charms have made upon me"—

"In spite of your allegiance to 'another'? Carlyle is right—'Man is not what one may call a happy animal; his appetite for sweet victual is so enormous.'"

"A sad truth; but I hope I shall not be regarded as the *bête noir* of your trip from Zermatt."

"By no means! you have supplied the spice of the journey."

"Miss Gellert will restore peace to her lover's torn heart before she sleeps, I doubt not, and I shall take a carriage in the morning, and drive over to Interlaken."

"Ah! shall you leave us? I supposed we should have had the pleasure of your company still farther in our journeyings."

"Thanks; but the lady to whom I referred will reach Interlaken to-morrow with her parents, and I must be at hand to meet her."

Zandy and Arthur arrived from the gorge just then, and Mrs. Lowe appeared soon after. Brooke was not missed especially until Arthur reported that he was not in his room, and he was still absent at tea-time.

As they left the dining-room, Arthur and Mr. Craighead a little behind the the others, a note was handed to Arthur. He

went back to the light, and having read it, silently handed it to Mr. Craighead, who had lingered, conceiving that it might have something to do with Brooke's lengthened absence. It was written with a trembling hand, evidently, and was scarcely legible; but Mr. Craighead made it out:

DEAR ARTHUR—Hope is dead forever, and I wish to God I were. I will not stay to cast the gloom of my despair over you all. You have been patient and kind, and I wish you would thank your mother for me for her generous forbearance.

Good-by,

BROOKE.

On inquiry it was found that Brooke had left the hotel soon after dark, and had been seen walking alone and hastily towards the entrance to the Pass; and it was at once decided that Mr. Craighead and Arthur should overtake him, if possible, and bring him back: he was in no state to take that journey alone. The preparations were speedily made, and so quietly that no one, outside the party, suspected anything more than a moonlight stroll among the mountains. Even the two most concerned knew nothing of it.

"It is a very sorry affair, my dear," said Mrs. Lowe, when she and Zandy had watched the disappearance of their friends and a guide up the mountain path; "but we will hope for the best; it may all come out right in the end."

"If Grace were only different!" said Zandy, sadly.

"This may prove a useful lesson to her, dear. We will hope it may."

They went up stairs together, and when they reached her own door, Mrs. Lowe said, "Will you come in? You will not care to stay alone."

"I think I had better see Grace first," Zandy answered.

"When you leave Grace, come to me; we shall neither of us feel like sleeping."

Zandy found Grace sitting at the window with the moonlight streaming over her. She was silent, while Zandy drew near; but, as Zandy did not speak at once, she glanced up, saying, "Well?" in a petulant tone.

"Do you know what has happened, Grace?" said Zandy.

"Happened?—since when?—nothing remarkable can have happened since I came up stairs."

"Mr. Donovan has not come back yet."

"I should think that was something that had *not* happened," said Grace, carelessly; "he will come when he gets over his pet."

"Grace! how can you be so indifferent to the misery you cause?" exclaimed Zandy. "You have driven Brooke to despair, and he"—

"How do you know what I have done? has he been complaining to you?" demanded Grace, angrily.

"I have not seen him," replied Zandy. "But you know you have given him great pain—it seems to me you have tried to make him miserable, and I think it is dreadfully cruel."

"I suppose it is a great deal worse for me to flirt than for you," cried Grace, and she went on, paying no heed to Zandy's indignant protest:—"You think nobody notices your flirtations, because you put on such an air of unconscious innocence; and perhaps you don't *call* it flirting for you to clasp your hands, and make such an ado when Brooke looked over the precipice, as if he were your lover instead of mine—I suppose to make Mr. Lowe jealous, while you tried to win Brooke from me.—If I receive attentions from Mr. Donovan, it is dreadful, and if from anybody else it is cruel; but it is only kindness and angelic goodness in you to walk and talk and ride with Mr. Lowe all the time since we left Vevay, when you don't mean ever to be engaged to him. You think, because nothing is said, that nobody notices your flirtation; but everybody thinks that he is as much in love with you as Brooke is with me, and thinks you care for him, while *I* know you are in love with Stephen Hollister, and were all the time he was in love with me. You managed beautifully about the letters! But I can assure you of one thing—Mrs. Lowe will call your behavior anything but angelic when she knows that, after all, you don't care for her son."

Zandy had stood in shadow, and Grace did not stop to wonder, while she uttered her excited tirade, what effect it would have. As she finished she turned again to the window, but the tone in which Zandy said "Grace!" made her look up, and she started at the sight of the face before her, now in the full, clear light of the moon—it was so white, and wore such a look of suppressed pain. The beautiful eyes held hers, in spite of herself, while Zandy said with the utmost womanly dignity:

"It cannot be that you mean what you have said, but I would not have believed that one woman could so far forget herself as to utter such things to another—even in anger. I will not speak of anything that concerns me alone; but—but what you say every one knows, is *not* true, and no one can think it is. *You* know it is not. Mr. Lowe is my friend—oh, how could you?"—Zandy felt her self-control giving way, and stopped suddenly, and with hurried steps, left the room.

After a time, Grace went to Mrs. Lowe's door. Mrs. Lowe was surprised at seeing her, instead of Zandy, but she led her in kindly, and Grace, in her sweetest manner, made known her errand: She had come to ask if they had seen Mr. Donovan yet?—she was afraid she had made him very unhappy, but she had not meant to. Had he come back?

"No—Did not Alexandra tell you?" Mrs. Lowe asked.

"She only told me that he had not returned then, but that was some time ago. Oh, Mrs. Lowe! do you know more than you are willing to tell me? Don't keep it from me, please."

There was real trouble in Grace's face and tones, and Mrs. Lowe told her the truth, not softening it in the least, but rather dwelling upon the terrible possibilities, which she had not admitted to herself before, and even let her read Brooke's note to Arthur.

The thought of Brooke's despair, and possible fate, really aroused every feeling of tenderness and remorse of which Grace was capable. She shed tears of sincere sorrow, blamed herself for not being more open with her friends in regard to her love for Brooke, confessing that she had loved him all the time, but feared no one would approve of an engagement, and altogether seemed so simply earnest, that Mrs. Lowe became quite hopeful. Grace said if Brooke would only come back safely, and would forgive her for all she had made him suffer, she would try to make him as happy as she had made him miserable—if Mrs. Lowe approved, and thought her aunt and uncle would not object.

Mrs. Lowe was sure no one could object, if Grace really loved Brooke. She was quite willing to take the responsibility of everything but a formal engagement—of course that must wait until they reached Vevay, and had Mr. and Mrs. Craighead's sanction. And at last she sent her to bed, promising to let her know when there were any tidings.

Mrs. Lowe wondered that Zandy did not come to her, but concluded that she had some good reasons for choosing to be by herself, and so she took her pen and wrote letters to occupy some of the long, anxious hours of waiting.

It was after two o'clock when Mrs. Lowe heard a light knock at her door, and opening it, found Zandy standing without, dressed as when she had seen her last, but with a face from which all her efforts had not banished the traces of violent weeping.

"My dear child!—come in; I thought you were in bed and fast asleep," said Mrs. Lowe, tenderly.

"I didn't feel like going to bed," replied Zandy, in a faint,

husky voice, as she sank wearily into the chair Mrs. Lowe drew beside her own.

"Why didn't you come to me then, dear, and not stay by yourself all these dismal hours? I could have given you real comfort, for I have seen Grace, and I believe she really loves Brooke, and they may be happy yet. If you always make other people's troubles your own, in this way, you will have more than your share of pain.—My darling child!" she said as Zandy buried her face in her hands and sobbed uncontrollably, "you are worn out with grief and watching."

"No--no—I am not," ejaculated poor Zandy.

"You are, indeed, my sweet child; you shall lie down here until they come," returned Mrs. Lowe.

She put her arms about her to lead her to the bed, but was at the instant startled by another light knock. She went to the door, and there stood Arthur and Mr. Craighead and Brooke.

"Here we are, all safe, mother dear," said Arthur, in a quiet voice, kissing her.

She drew Brooke into the room, and greeted him with a motherly tenderness that went to his heart.

As Arthur was closing the door, Zandy, who saw that she could not be unobserved any longer, came hurriedly to be let out. Arthur would have detained her, but when he saw her tear-stained face, and how eager she was to escape, he opened the door for her, gazing at her with troubled eyes and a heart full of concern.

"Are you not glad to see us safely back, Alexandra?" asked her uncle, as she passed him.

"Indeed I am," she replied earnestly, pausing, and yielding her trembling hand to Arthur's grasp. "I am more glad than I can tell.—Good night."

Mr. Craighead went out with her, and they conferred for a few minutes concerning Grace. Zandy repeated what Mrs. Lowe had said, but did not refer to her own interview with her. Mr. Craighead led her to her own door and dismissed her with affectionate gentleness, advising her not to get up to breakfast, but to sleep as late as she could.

Mrs. Lowe had said, as she looked into Brooke's pale face, "My dear Brooke, how relieved I am to see you!"

"You are too kind!" exclaimed Brooke, nearly crushing her hand in his grasp; "you should scold me, berate me, send me away. There is nothing you could do that would punish me as I deserve. I have made a fool of myself, and given you all immense trouble and anxiety. I don't believe I can ever look into your faces by daylight, I am so ashamed," he cried, with a

sudden touch of his boyish impetuosity of manner. "I expect to wish in the morning that I had fallen into the Dala or the Dauben See, and forever quenched my blushes."

"Where were you when they overtook you?"

"Nearly—but, dear Mrs. Lowe, don't ask me—ask Arthur, he will tell you all about it. I never want to hear the Gemmi Pass distantly referred to again."

"I will not ask anybody about it to-night. You must both go to bed and get some sleep."

Brooke lingered, evidently longing to ask some questions, but Mrs. Lowe playfully persisted in saying good-night; so he left the room. But when he had shut the door and turned, thinking to walk softly past Grace's room before going to his own, there stood Grace herself, in the moonlight, with something soft and white around her shoulders, her fair hair falling about her sweet face. As he paused an instant to assure himself of the reality of the lovely vision, a dainty voice said, "Brooke, dear Brooke!" and little white hands were stretched towards him. In a moment more the hands were clasped about his neck, and he had forgotten all his misery and mortification in the assurance of her love.

CHAPTER XL.

IN THE "HAPPY VALLEY."

ZANDY left her room the next morning in bewildered uncertainty as to the hour, only knowing that the sun was high above the eastern hills.

Her uncle met her at the foot of the stairs: "Pale cheeks and heavy eyes," he said, after a brief scrutiny;—"a natural consequence, I suppose, of sitting up most of the night. You should have gone to bed and to sleep, taking things coolly, and then you might have looked as rosy and gay as Grace does. But perhaps breakfast will brighten your spirits; I feel that it will have a beneficial effect on mine. Come, and we will try it."

"Have the rest all been to breakfast?" asked Zandy, as they seated themselves at the table, spread for two.

"Yes;—what time do you take it to be?"

"I have no idea; I forgot to wind my watch last night."

"It is half past ten;—I was late myself—just in time to see Cæsus off, by-the-by."

"Why! has he gone?"

"Yes. Didn't you know that he was to join his lady-love at Interlaken to-day?"

"His lady-love!" repeated Zandy, in amazement.

"You seem surprised at his having one. You saw nothing to militate against such a fact, did you?" asked Mr. Craighead, breaking an egg.

"Only his attentions to Grace," replied Zandy.

"What! are you really so simple, and you a young lady of eighteen, as to imagine that a man's being engaged to one lady is any reason for his not being attentive to others? I am truly surprised; that may be an Oxleyan notion—it would never be received in polite society. Yes—whatever misgivings Cæsus may have had as to the comparative charms of his dear Dulcinea, he will heroically smother them, and she will be happy in his truth and devotion. He left his regards and adieus for you."

"I don't wish for them!" exclaimed Zandy, with sudden vehemence. "It is a cruel shame for men and women to be so untrue and make each other"—

She paused in confusion, and burning blushes dyed her face and throat.

"A little mingling with the world will cure you of such crude prejudices, my dear girl," said her uncle lightly, wondering what had caused her confusion; and he changed the subject, by telling her that Mrs. Lowe had instructed him to take her to the gorge, as soon as they had breakfasted, unless she came back first. "It looked so like rain, and the time of your descent was so uncertain, they concluded not to wait for us, and I suppose our friend Arthur is looking for us impatiently."

"I don't care to go to the gorge, Uncle Johnston," Zandy said; "I wish you would go without me, and you can tell them"—

"Tell them what?—that you didn't care to come?"

"Yes; that I preferred to stay here quietly; I don't feel like walking, this morning."

No one could doubt that Zandy spoke the truth, who saw her weary look, and Mr. Craighead left her seated on the piazza, looking listlessly at the overhanging cliffs, and the mountains, whose tops were veiled in mist. He had been gone but a few minutes when Arthur appeared.

Zandy started when she first saw him at the other end of the piazza, and then sat still, trying to feel composed, while she awaited his coming with averted head, instead of with frank pleasure, as she would have done only the day before.

She returned his "Good morning" with a reserve that amounted to coldness, and there followed a silence, for Arthur was too much pained and mystified by the utter change in her manner to speak at once, and Zandy was too thoroughly disconcerted to assume ease she did not feel.

"I am sorry you are feeling the effects of last night's vigils so much," he said at last, sitting down beside her. "It is not to be wondered at, though, there was such cause for anxiety, and you could have slept very little."

"I did sleep,"—Zandy replied. "I have only a headache now, and it will not last. How tired *you* must be," she said, turning towards him for the first time, forgetting herself for the moment; "I am afraid you feel ill, you look so pale; it must have been a dreadful night for you; I haven't heard anything about it yet."

A flush of pleasure overspread Arthur's face while Zandy spoke, that made her eyes fall and her cheeks grow hot. She was painfully confused, but a keen sense that her confusion must seem incomprehensible to Arthur, that it was even open to misconstruction, made her control it as far as possible; and acting upon the first impulse that suggested itself as a relief, she

said, rising hastily, "I would like to go to the gorge, after all. Perhaps a walk would cure my headache."

"I wanted to advise it," Arthur returned; "it often proves the very best thing for a headache caused by want of sleep."

As they walked slowly across the meadow, Arthur gave a brief account of the previous night's experiences, and when they met Mrs. Lowe and Mr. Craighead, who were not far from the entrance to the ravine, on their way out, Zandy was quite at ease.

"I am sorry you are not well to-day, my dear," Mrs. Lowe said; "but a little exercise now, and a nap by-and-by, will make you quite yourself again, I trust."

Grace and Brooke were a little further up the gorge, Grace poised on a rock in the edge of the torrent, with her hand resting on Brooke's shoulder, giving a perfect view of her perfect figure in perfect attitude; she would have answered as a faultless model for a Hebe. She kissed her hand to Zandy, and called a gay "Good-morning," which Zandy answered quietly.

"Are you not coming to take a farewell look at the Happy Valley?" asked Arthur, as Zandy started with Mrs. Lowe and Mr. Craighead to leave the gorge.

"I—don't think—I—they have all seen it," Zandy said, feeling miserably disconcerted again.

"Yes, so we have, dear," said Mrs. Lowe; "but that need not prevent your going to pay your farewell visit."

There was no help for it, and Zandy turned back with Arthur. Almost in silence they walked along beside the torrent, Zandy feeling a wild joy in the water's impetuous rush; and the quiet of the valley fell with a soothing influence.

"It is lovelier here, in this gray morning light than it was last night; don't you think so?" she said, as they stood on the little bridge and listened to the noise of the torrent outside, and the hum of the brook and of insects.

"It could hardly seem lovelier to me than it did then," Arthur answered.—"I think it was the sweetest hour I have known in Switzerland—have ever known."

A hush followed. Zandy felt as if Arthur must hear the throbbing of her heart, it beat so loud and fast. At length, involuntarily, because she could not speak, she turned to see why he did not; and again their eyes met, and again Zandy's fell, and the bright rose flashed over her face. She covered it with her hands in dire shame at her confusion; but caught them away as she felt the touch of Arthur's trembling fingers.

All the color had fled, and she looked into Arthur's face with a grave resolve deepening in her eyes that made him wait in breathless silence for her to speak.

Two or three times words trembled on the sweet lips, but she could not utter them, and still Arthur waited. At length, with an effort that sent the blood in a hot torrent to her cheeks, though they were white again with the next breath—she began:

"I have something to say—you may think me forward and unwomanly, but I can bear that better—better than—than that you should be mistaken, and—oh, how *can* I say it?" she cried in distress.

"Better than that I should think what is not true, would you say?" asked Arthur in a hollow voice.

"Yes," Zandy answered.

"I love you—I have hoped"—Arthur stopped, controlling by an immense effort an outburst of long pent-up passion.

"I am so sorry!"—simple words, but how much they meant, coming from those white, quivering lips. "And I can do nothing," she said, after a little pause, dropping her clasped hands hopelessly before her.—"I never dreamed, until last night," she went on sadly, "that such a thing was possible: that any one could possibly think of us as—as anything but dear friends;—not that it would matter what others thought, if *you* understood.—You do believe," she added after another pause, as Arthur stood motionless, "that I never meant to grieve you so—don't you?"

"I do believe it—I *know* it." He could not make his voice sound anything but despairing.

"But that is only kindness to me," sighed Zandy; "it doesn't help you."

"Yes, it does; if I doubted your truth I should have no faith left in God or man."

Zandy could only sob in unavailing misery. They stood for some time, the sweet murmur of the brook, and the hum of insects, and the noise of the torrent without, unheeded. At length Arthur turned to Zandy with a question upon his lips—but he could not ask it. His eyes rested for a moment upon her, his heart torn with contending feelings of yearning tenderness, jealousy and despair, and tears came—the first he had shed since he was a boy.

At last he said gently: "You must not grieve so, Alexandra; your friendship has made me very happy, and if I hoped for more it was not your fault."

Zandy felt as if her heart would break.

"There is one favor I would like to ask of you," Arthur said, after a long silence. "It is a great one, but if you can"—

"Only tell me what it is," said Zandy eagerly, putting by her tears. "If I can do anything, I shall be so glad."

"It is, that for the few days we shall be together in Switzerland"—he stopped, overwhelmed by the desolate thought of what was to come—"that for these few days you will let our relations seem the same, as far as possible—those of frank friendship, so that my mother may be spared the regret she will naturally feel when she first knows of my disappointment.—I would not have suggested it, only that I feel it to be better for us all; and if you think about it, and decide what to do before we meet the others, it will be easier for you."

"I know it," moaned Zandy; "you are too good to me, and your mother has been so kind, and I shall only give her pain."

"She will not blame you."

"Oh, it isn't that," cried Zandy, "but it is too, too dreadful, that I should make her and you unhappy. If I could only have it different!"

"I forbid your crying any more," Arthur said, with a dismal attempt at playfulness, as Zandy's tears flowed afresh. "Come to the brook and bathe your face, and by the time we get to the foot of the gorge the air will have cooled your hot cheeks."

With the matter-of-fact gentleness of a brother he performed what little services he could for her, and the quiet manner he assumed—with how great an effort!—was a wonderful help to her in recovering her composure.

CHAPTER XLI.

MORE THAN ONE GOOD-BY.

ZANDY hurried to her own room when she and Arthur reached the hotel, thankful at meeting no one on the way.

After a time, as she lay on the bed, with her hands pressed over her aching eyes, the door opened without a knock, and Grace entered.

"Oh! are you here, Zandy?" she cried; "I thought you were in the gorge with Mr. Lowe, still. I came to borrow your water-proof; Brooke and I are going to sit out on the piazza, and it rains, and Brooke insists on my bundling up, and your blue water-proof is so much more becoming than mine;—I suppose I can take it. Is anything the matter?" she asked, coming to the bedside with the cloak over her arm.

"Yes—my head aches."

"Too bad, isn't it?" Grace said, touching Zandy's hand.

There never was a softer, daintier touch than Grace's, but Zandy drew her hand away as if it had been stung.

"Oh, my dear!" cried Grace, with a light laugh; "I am afraid you are cross, besides having the headache. Has Mamma Lowe found out that you have been trifling with her son's affections, and scolded you for it? Never mind, all is fair in love and war."

Zandy lifted her pale face from the pillow, her eyes flashing, while her lips quivered.

"Grace," she said, "I have borne all that I can, or ever will, bear from you. Please understand what I say, and remember it. Perhaps we had better not speak at all, and let it be understood that we don't."

"That wouldn't be lady-like," replied Grace carelessly. "We had better *seem* friendly, and I promise to let your affairs alone—not as you did mine in Geneva. You can flirt"—

"Grace! I meant what I said!" cried Zandy; "leave my room this minute."

"If Arthur and his mamma could but see you in a temper!" said Grace, putting on the water-proof, and obeying Zandy's command.

The party met at a late dinner, and as a party it was a re-

markably cheerful one. If some of its members were quiet or *distract*, the rest made up for it. Even Mrs. Lowe's watchful eyes saw nothing that she could not readily account for in Zandy's paleness and Arthur's unusual gravity.

The rain continued, with a brief pretence of clearing away at sunset, on through the twilight. Brooke and Grace had betaken themselves to the end of the piazza; Mrs. Lowe and Zandy sat at an open window in the parlor, where they had been watching the curtains of mist rise and fall before the mountains, tinged with sudden crimson at sunset, and Arthur and Mr. Craighead sat outside talking to them.

"There are some new comers," said Mr. Craighead presently, looking through the shadows toward the mountain-path. "They are speaking to Grace and Mr. Donovan.—Upon my word, I believe it is Mr. Hollister and the Leightons!"

"I think it is," said Arthur.

"Go and see, my dear," suggested his mother. Arthur went, and Mr. Craighead followed. "It will seem very odd if we have chanced to meet again. To be sure, they were coming across the Gemmi, but we have been so much longer on the way than they were likely to be, it would seem more reasonable that they should have passed us farther back, while we were stopping." Mr. Craighead and Arthur came back soon.

"The question is settled, mother," Arthur said. "They will report themselves when they are presentable, and have had supper."

"How does it happen that they are here as late as we, when we travelled so leisurely?" asked Mrs. Lowe.

"They didn't leave the Riffel till Saturday, as Charlie was still a little under the weather."

"They were amazed to find us here, supposing that we had gone to the Rhone Glacier," Mr. Craighead remarked.

"It must be clearing off," Mrs. Lowe said, by-and-by; "there is a gleam of moonlight on the mountains. Let us go out and see, Alexandra."

They left the parlor, and joined the gentlemen on the piazza; Grace and Brooke came from their retreat, and all enjoyed the lovely scene: the mountains with their pale draperies of mist, the sky with its floating, fleecy clouds, and golden stars shining between—mountains, mist, woods, fields and clouds all wrapped in the moon's silver mantle. The irrepressible torrents caught the silver fringes, and tore them into myriad shining bits as they dashed along. The entrances to the Gorge and the Pass stood out darkly, like suggestions of great mysteries.

It was not long before George Leighton came out, in haste to find his much-regretted friends of the Riffel.

"I have missed you awfully," he exclaimed, when he had shaken hands all around with great unction. "When I spied Miss Gellert and Mr. Donovan sitting on the piazza, I came near throwing up my hat and shouting. Haven't we been a stupid old party, Mr. Hollister?" he demanded, as Stephen and Charlie came out and joined them.

"I shouldn't like to cast a reflection on my companions by saying, yes," said Stephen laughing, "though I do recognize the immensely superior attractions of Mrs. Lowe's party."

The moon came from under a cloud at the moment, and shone full upon the group; and Zandy found Grace's eyes fixed on her face with a critical look. She felt her color change, and shrank back involuntarily. But when Stephen came to speak to her, she was able to reply to his matter-of-fact questions and remarks with self-possession. If she had known that Arthur was watching her anxiously, she might have failed.

"Mr. Hollister," cried George, who was talking with Grace and Brooke, "here's another complication, and the most aggravating one of all. Listen! if we had'n't changed our plans, we might have gone home in the same steamer with the young ladies and the rest of them! Isn't that a touch beyond endurance? If our passage wasn't taken on the French line, I should move heaven and earth—which is only equivalent to moving Mr. Hollister and Charlie when their minds are made up—to get to go with you."

"Circumstances and your wishes do seem to go at cross purposes," Stephen said.

Later in the evening, when Stephen and Charlie had been to see the gorge by moonlight, and had returned, Stephen happened to stand beside Zandy for a few minutes.

"You have thoroughly enjoyed Switzerland, have you not?" he asked.

"Oh yes! even more than I expected, and I thought I expected everything."

"It has been more to me than I anticipated," Stephen said, not looking at Zandy.

"I should think it must prove a surprise to every one;—no one could imagine how beautiful it is," said Zandy.

Both were silent then, Zandy feeling that she had only touched the surface of Stephen's remarks, in her reply, and thinking of nothing else to say. Presently there was a movement, showing that the party was preparing to disperse. Then Stephen turned to Zandy: "You must not cast away as worth-

less the truth I faintly intimated by the cairn that day on the Riffel. It is not a small thing to be of use to a human soul, not a thing to slight or deny, and you have helped mine;—it was in darkness, and you let the light in; you taught me, inspired me, and I never shall lose the sense of my obligations to you. Will you do yourself and me the justice to believe this, and to be glad in it?"

Stephen's tone was so gravely sincere that Zandy could not choose but meet his eyes and answer, "I must believe it, though I do not see how it *can* be true."

"Some time, years hence, if we meet, perhaps I may be able to make you see." This was said with a smile, but there was an indescribably sad cadence in the tones, and Zandy felt a strange thrill of pain.

The next morning, with the usual bustle of departures, three carriages drove from the hotel. In the first were Zandy, Mr. Craighead and George Leighton; in the second were Mrs. Lowe, Grace and Brooke; and in the last, Stephen, Charlie, and Arthur Lowe.

They stopped at Frutigen to lunch and change horses, and when they started on again, the good-bys had been said, and George had taken Arthur's place with Stephen and Charlie. Before long they came to a road that, branching to the left, leads to Thun, where their letters and luggage awaited them, and whither they were bound. Mrs. Lowe's party kept on to Interlaken. Hats and handkerchiefs were waved as the carriages separated, and soon distance and hills intervened.

A week or two later Stephen and the Leightons sailed for home.

At Berne, in one of their long talks, which Arthur had rather avoided of late, Mrs. Lowe discovered his desolate secret, and then she only wondered that she had not seen it before. Much that had seemed unaccountable was made very clear.

The knowledge of Arthur's disappointment was a terrible blow to her, and at first she bitterly condemned Zandy; not to Arthur, for she knew it would only pain and not convince him; but in her heart she called her unworthy, and, after all, wanting in truth and honor. But her sense of justice soon asserted itself. Her clear eyes saw the case truthfully, even while they shed the saddest tears they had known in years, and her heart acknowledged Zandy's nobility, even while it was heavy with grief for Arthur's suffering.

At Lucerne they separated.—Could Zandy ever forget the agony of his face when he bade her good-by? and could he ever

be happy, with that sweet presence a memory only, never again a reality?

"Many a green isle needs must be
In the deep wide sea of misery,
Or the mariner, worn and wan,
Never thus could voyage on,
Day and night, and night and day,
Drifting on his dreary way,
With the solid darkness black
Closing round his vessel's track:"

and heroic souls, who bravely breast the billows, soonest find those "flowering isles."

The breaking up of the party was quietly arranged, with few comments and no explanations, though Grace at least understood the cause, and made Zandy feel that she understood it.

Zandy could not help being glad at meeting her uncle and aunt and the Forsyths, on reaching Vevay, and at finding her aunt somewhat improved in health, and fully decided on going home. The morbid spirit of self-sacrifice in which the decision had been arrived at was not apparent.

The engagement between Grace and Brooke was consented to by Mr. and Mrs. Craighead, though with some reluctance, not from any misgivings as to Brooke's merits; his frank ardor and genial nature, at once won the confidence of both, especially of Mr. Craighead. It was only the necessity of a long engagement, and some unacknowledged doubt of Grace's proving steadfast, that caused a question as to its wisdom. Mrs. Forsyth was charmed, troubling herself with no fears for the future, thinking only of the fair present.

The only drawback in the matter, to the lovers, was the prospect of their speedy separation. It nearly distracted Brooke, and if Mr. and Mrs. Craighead would have consented, he would have taken passage in the steamer with them for America. When the veritable hour of parting came, he was nearly unmanned, and Grace believed the assurances she gave him, that she should never know a happy moment till he came to her.

A sad visit to Geneva, a week in Paris, where Mrs. Forsyth was in her element, shopping with Grace and Zandy with unwearying skill, and then Mr. and Mrs. Craighead, Zandy, Grace and Johnston, were on their homeward way.

CHAPTER XLII.

WEDDING BELLS.

THE soft golden sunlight and purple haze of Indian Summer rest over Oxley, over The Brothers and the lake, over Evergreen Island, and over all the hills and fields and woods far and near; the bronzed foliage of the many oaks in and about Oxley mingles with the silvery gray of the leafless trees; the waters of the lake answer to the light touch of the breeze in ripples and little waves, that in their turn catch the sunlight and reflect the turquoise of the sky, without losing their own emerald hue.

Zandy looks out upon the scene, filled with a sense of its loveliness and her love for it, and of her joy at seeing it once more.

Ever since she came home, she has been resisting the witness of her own heart that there is more than the mere memory of events and places between her and the Zandy of two years ago. When the conviction forces itself upon her, she feels very much as she does when she sees that her grandfather's hair is thinner and whiter about the temples, and that her grandmother wears her spectacles more than she used to do; as she does when she realizes anew that Corrie and Johnny have grown, and the little childish ways and looks she has especially cherished have been laid aside. But these are shadows that intensify, rather than lessen, the joy of being at home; as she says to herself, turning from the window now, "I am glad I came before anything had happened to make me feel older and soberer," and she submits herself to Pauline, who puts the finishing touches to her toilet.

For this is Edith's wedding-day, and at this moment Edith stands before the pier-glass in her mother's sitting-room, taking a lingering survey of her completed toilet. The truthful reflection tells her that the white satin hangs in soft glimmering folds—that the most critical could find no fault with its style; and the face, one would say, might satisfy the aspirations of any woman, even on her wedding-day; and yet the survey ends with a sigh, and there are shadows, tears even, in the beautiful eyes, as she turns to her mother, who stands gazing at her with fond pride.

"What does this mean, my love?" her mother asks anxiously; "I cannot have you cry to-day."

"I am ashamed, mother dear, but I am unhappy—about my hair. I do wish it were brown, a white-haired bride is such a dreadful thing; at least I should have been married in a gray dress and cap and spectacles, not in white satin and a veil!"

"Foolish child!" her mother exclaims, "I am glad that is all. What would Sydney say if he knew you were shedding tears over the locks he loves so much?"

"He is very good, and makes the best of what can't be helped, and I know I ought to do the same: but—they are so like my dress. It *is* hard for Sydney, mother dear, you know it is."

"I know nothing of the kind, my love!"—Mrs. Craighead cries; "there *never* was a man so blest, so highly honored, and I will not have you speak, or even think such things."

"You are a dear comforter, mother," Edith says with a smile, and she adds, "If I *am* to wear a veil and flowers, where is my tire-woman?"

"I stopped at the door as I came by; she was very nearly ready then. I suppose Pauline will not be satisfied until not another touch can be added."

"Well Corrie!"—

Corrie has thrown open the door, not waiting for an answer to her sharp knock, and in her pretty white muslin, with sparkling eyes and the most elated air, she stands aside to announce "The Lady Alexandra!" who enters with stately grace, Johnny acting the part of a page, bearing her train, the first she has ever worn. Rachel and Pauline follow to witness the effect of the grand *entré*, which is all that could be desired. Zandy forgets her state at sight of Edith, and even Corrie's admiration is diverted for the moment. But she soon recovers from the daze caused by Edith's satin sheen and lace and pearls.

"Isn't *Zandy* beautiful, grandmamma?" she cries, standing back to get the full effect. "I do think she is!—such a sweet dress, and her hair!"—she sighs in the depth of her satisfaction. "Walk away, Zandy, and let them see the grand trail. Johnny! let it be, do. Look how supremely it sweeps behind!"

The pale blue silk, simply yet most gracefully fashioned, harmonizes perfectly with the exquisite coloring of Zandy's face and hair, and sets off the pliant, girlish beauty of her figure. The small head, set so proudly on the delicate throat, has no adornment but its own brightness, and it needs no other.

"Oh, Aunt Edith! the veil!—one would think *I* was the queen of the day," Zandy exclaims suddenly. "Hark!—there

is Dick calling me, and nobody must come in now. Run away, my pets, and tell them they may come pretty soon."

The children depart; Zandy locks the door after them, and her tasteful fingers are at once busy with the veil, and the result is faultless. Zandy wonders if there ever before was so lovely a bride, and Mrs. Craighead was sure there never was.

The boys and girls are in the nursery, waiting to be summoned, and thither Zandy hastens. When Grace sees her at the door, she cries, "*Voilà! Quel ange!*" and Zandy is overwhelmed with comments and praises from Dick and Royal.

"You will make her frightfully vain," Grace cries with a little laugh, as with some gallant speech Dick offers his arm to Zandy to lead the way to his grandmother's room.

"Small danger of that," Royal says; "her little head is too well poised to be easily turned."

"At least, she never can have a doubt as to her being pretty after this," Grace says, with another laugh.

"I never have had, Grace," Zandy says, lightly.

They enter Edith's presence, but Zandy slips away, and goes to her Aunt Louisa's door. She dreads appearing before her aunt, knowing that the sight of her will prove a great shock, although it was understood that she should lay aside black from Edith's wedding day.

Mrs. Craighead is dressed in lustreless silk, with heavy folds of crape. Her hair is arranged with a severe simplicity that seems to magnify the marks of suffering—the pallor, the contraction between the eyes, and the sadness of the eyes themselves.

Zandy opens the door slowly, and when she sees the look of pain that crosses her aunt's face, and that it is turned away hastily, the light seems all gone out of the day; for the moment she hates her blue dress and wishes herself in black again; and she speaks timidly, as if she had been convicted of a cruelty: "Will you come and see Aunt Edith, aunty?—she is quite ready now, and we shall go down soon."

"Very well," Mrs. Craighead says, without turning her head, and as Zandy lingers she adds, "don't wait, child," and Zandy goes away without a word.

Her Uncle William meets her in the hall and says cheerfully: "How fine you look, Zandy! what a talent you have, too, for dressing brides."

Zandy goes to the nursery, glad to find it empty; but Grace and Dick and others come very soon, saying that Mr. Boyd has arrived.

Now the ceremony is over; the family have greeted the

bride and bridegroom, and the hum of conversation and the rustle of general motion have succeeded the hush, while the congratulations go on.

Zandy is the object of warmest interest, next to Edith, among the guests, as few of them have seen her before since her return from Europe. She wins golden opinions, for, with all her beauty and grace of manner, she is her own frank, warm-hearted self, with "no Parisian airs and assumptions, such as some girls come home with," as one critical Oxleyan lady declares, with a disapproving glance at Miss Gellert, who "seems to find no one worth talking to, but her cousins."

Grace is dressed in pale pink, and looks as dainty and fair as an apple-blossom. Her lovely shoulders are bare, a point which she and Mrs. Forsyth carried when the dresses were made in Paris, against her aunt and Zandy; and she wears pearls that were her mother's, and that she had in mind when she was so decided as to the fashion of her dress. The exquisite necklace would have been valueless, if she could not have displayed it upon the excelling whiteness of her neck. The pearl bandeau gleams in the soft, fair curls.

The spell of Grace's power over Dick is broken since he knows that she "belongs to 'Another,'" and then he entertains the liveliest affection for Zandy. It is possible that Grace might regain her old influence over him if she had a fair chance, but Zandy would count it a great wrong to leave anything untried to save him from that evil, as she regards it; and her warm interest in all that interests him, and her unfailing good humor are hourly strengthening her own power for good.

Mrs. Chandler wears her favorite dress of lavender silk and black lace, and is as much a favorite with the Craigheads as ever. She insists that she is much more feminine than she used to be, and her husband insists that she has humanized him; their growing pride and satisfaction in each other is beyond a question.

Carrie Reynolds is herself, but greatly improved. Her eyes have a happy serenity that is very pleasant to see, and her face altogether has the look that always comes with the brave bearing of trials and an earnest struggle for self-conquest. Mr. Reynolds deserted his family a year ago, and Carrie at once undertook to earn a livelihood for herself and those left wholly dependent upon her, by opening a school for children in Oxley. And the experiment may be fairly counted a success. Susie has grown womanly and helpful under Carrie's influence; Charlie adds somewhat to the general income, and Mrs. Reynolds grows less querulous as her strength wanes. Carrie is not engaged, and

often thinks she never shall be; but Hammy Forbes is her true love, and waits, not patiently but hopefully. He was sorely tried with her for applying to the Craigheads in her distress, and considers it no excuse that she knew he would insist upon marrying her and her family, and that she could not so give up her independence. Martin has sent Carrie several little tokens of his good-will, and now has brought himself to spend two or three days with her, and was invited to the wedding for her sake.

"Zandy," Carrie says, seizing an instant when her friend is not absolutely occupied with some one else, "Martin says I shall have to introduce him to you, before you will recognize him as an old acquaintance."

Zandy looks up at the gentlemanly person upon whose arm Carrie leans, and who smiles down upon her. Her quick eyes note at a glance the sandy English whiskers and heavy moustache, and the assured air, and, still a little incredulous, she offers her hand.

"I suppose Carrie knows who you are; but, indeed, you make me feel that I must have been gone ten years instead of two. Nobody that I have met has changed as much as you have."

"Nothing could please me more than that assurance, Miss Alexandra," Martin says—and even his voice is changed, and is deep and nicely modulated—"for there never was a more *gauche*, disagreeable boy than that Mart Reynolds you used to know and reasonably detest. I hope you will consider that our acquaintance begins now, and I trust that this bright day and charming occasion may prove omens of its prosperous future."

Zandy acknowledges the hope with a smile, and immediately Martin falls into a pleasant talk of things that happened in her absence, and of Carrie's trials and courage, and his impatience to be able to take the burden from her—and interests Zandy so much that when he offers his arm to take her to the dining-room, she accepts it, for the time forgetting her old aversion and distrust.

While she is eating an ice, with Martin beside her, absorbed in what she tells him of Paris, she becomes conscious of Grace's intent gaze, and wonders what the look can mean. Others claim her attention soon, and when she next sees Martin he is shaking hands with Grace.

He has been conscious of Grace all the time, and conscious of her consciousness of him, and of her assumed unconsciousness, but it has not suited him to speak to her until now.

"I was sure you must be here," he says; "where have you

hidden the light of your presence, that it has not shone upon me?"

"I suppose other lights have dazzled you," she replies; but adds quickly, "I may ask where *you* have been all this time, that you have not looked for your old friend?"

Martin's greenish-gray eyes have a certain magnetic power at times, and Grace feels it fully now.

"I have been anxious to see you, Miss Gellert"—Grace looks a quick reproach at the formal address—"I wanted to congratulate you upon your happy engagement"—her eyes fall. "I hope I am not presuming too much, though I did receive my information at second hand."

"No—but—I wish"—there are tears in the soft eyes.

"What do you wish?"—that you had told me yourself, in your letters, instead of—letting me suppose very different things!"

Martin has a quick instinct for the reading of certain natures, and Grace's soul lies open before him. He silently waits until the blue eyes are raised to his, and meets them with a look of grave inquiry.

"Oh, Martin," Grace says softly, "I am very unhappy; don't judge me harshly, and don't cease to be my friend;—*please* say you will not! we have been friends so long."

Grace's manner is very beseeching, and Martin finds it a little difficult to maintain the calmly impressive manner his insight suggests as the most politic. But he answers:

"I could not be a mere friend to the one I have loved and expected to make my wife. You may judge how readily I can give up the cherished hope of years—that for which I have worked, to which I have bent every energy, that has directed and inspired all my efforts. It will be like making another man of me, but I shall make ambition my queen now, and by and by you will hear of me—you shall not scorn the man whose love you cast away. I shall always wish you well, and hope for your happiness, and I would do anything to serve you."—Grace listens to the quiet tones, and says nothing—what *can* she say?—"May I ask if you are to be married soon?"

"No, oh no! not for a year, at least."

"Shall you be in New York at all during the winter?"

"Oh yes," Grace says eagerly; "that is to be my home—with Uncle William and Aunt Louisa."

"You will live very quietly, of course. Your aunt's being so melancholy, and your being engaged as well, will keep you very secluded."

"It will be terrible! I don't know how I shall bear it; it

will be worse than Geneva," Grace says, clasping her little hands in a sort of childish despair.

"Do you think I might be admitted, on the strength of being an old Oxley acquaintance, if I were to call before I leave New York?" Martin asks.

"Leave New York!" Grace repeats;—"are you going away?"

"I expect to take my farewell of America soon—I cannot say just how soon, and our ever meeting again is a matter of doubt." Martin smiles inwardly, while he watches Grace's face with a becoming gloom in his own.

"Where are you going?" Grace asks, with no effort to keep her voice steady.

"Have you forgotten my long-fixed determination to make my home in Paris? The hope of being useful to you, that first turned my mind in that direction, has proved a vain one; but I have not changed my intention to spend my life on the other side the Atlantic; all my tastes and inclinations lead me there. Do you think I may come and bid you good-by?"

"I am sure you may—if you will," Grace says humbly, half bewildered with contending emotions, the uppermost of which is a frantic desire to have Martin promise to come and see her as soon as she gets to New York. But they are interrupted before she can say another word; and Martin bows and withdraws, not seeming to see the motion she makes to detain him. He knows he is only to remain in Oxley till the next day, and yet sees him take his leave without having bade her a special good-by.

Martin's thoughts ran on this wise: "Dear girl! how little she guesses how I have cursed her engagement. I was all right as soon as I saw that I hadn't lost my power over her through a *bona fide* love for somebody else. Soft little heart! it needs to be fed with love and devotion as babies are fed with pap, and I don't blame her for consoling herself while she was away from me, as long as I haven't lost her. When we are married—no more chance for flirtations, my dear! Some men would have beset her with reproaches, and made her feel her power, and would have spoiled all, probably. Nothing like understanding the female heart. How pretty and bewitching she is!—*my* Grace—my wife she *shall be*; I will never lose her—nor her fortune."

Edith's departure, when the moment came, was sad only as all departures and changes have a tinge of sadness in them, and the golden autumn day ended in a serene golden sunset.

CHAPTER XLIII.

OLD FRIENDS.

"Oh! is it you, Henry? Come in, dear. I thought it was Gregory, and wondered what happy chance had brought him home so early. Sit down here by Baby and mother and me, and enjoy the firelight."

"I knew I should find you and mother crooning by the nursery fire, and toasting the boy's toes at this hour. What time did you come, mother?"

"She came before lunch, my dear. The baby coughed, or looked as if he were going to, so I sent for her to come at once. It is a dreadful thing to have her two blocks away, and the baby expecting his teeth at any moment."

"You have Aunt Frisby; isn't she an authority in such matters?"

"I ought to have kept mother, and sent Aunt Frisby with you boys! My keeping her and letting you have mother was an act of self-sacrifice for which I deserve to be canonized."

"Who would have believed that Bessie would make an anxious, fussy mamma! Isn't it a development most unexpected and surprising, mother?"

"It is half put on, my dear, to make me feel my importance. I consider Bessie a model young mother, careful and anxious enough, but not a bit too much so."

"How is my small namesake? I haven't heard yet. Did he really cough, or did it prove a false alarm?"

"Hold up your head, my little man, and let your uncle see that you are the prince of babies, the diamond of the world, a June rosebud. Is there health in those cheeks?—are there brains in that head?—are those lips curled rose leaves?—are those eyes sapphires, like his father's?"—

"Is that nose Grecian, like his mother's?"

"No wonder you double your pink fists, little boy!—but never mind, dear; mamma is used to it, and we all know nothing could be lovelier for a baby than just such a cunning little pug as yours; and by the time it would be nicer to have it so, the gentle pinches we give it every day will have made it straight. So calmly toast your toes, and don't trouble

yourself to kick and double up your fist at that little impertinence."

"Mamma does well to begin thus early to inculcate philosophy. What a curious thing it is that babies always kick, and flourish their fists so much, as if they were disposed to fight with the fact of existence, and already felt themselves at odds with life!"

"I don't know much about children in general, but I *do* know that 'this one' is very much pleased with the fact of existence. You are glad you came, aren't you, little son?—helpless atom of humanity that you are, some day you

'May rise like a giant and make men bow,
As at one god-throned amidst his peers.'

Here comes Ann, to 'shoo' you to sleep, poor baby!"

"'Poor baby!' is it he is, Miss Bessie? an' is it because iv me havin' the care iv him? Was the blue eyes iv him closin' wid slape, an' did he want to be in his little bed an hour ago?—well, well!"—

"Come, mother and Henry, say good-night to the pet lamb.—It is high time Gregory and Stephen were here."

"Stephen won't be able to come to-night; I forgot to tell you, he sent his love and regrets."

"What a shame! It was an engagement, and I particularly wanted you all to-night, because Mrs. Frisby was to be out; she is spending the day with one of her familiars. What prevents his coming?"

"Thereon hangs a tale which I will presently unfold.—Have I ever remarked to you, Bessie, that I admire this room?" Henry said, not heeding his mother's and Bessie's exclamations of curious wonder, as they entered the drawing-room.

It was a large, nicely proportioned room, with a rich clear blue for its prevailing color. The heavy curtains, that gave it such a warm look of a winter evening, had a bright-colored bordering, and there were little vases of flowers, that lent their delicate perfume and their delicate brightness to the other charms. There were well filled book-cases on each side the fireplace, and there was a large round centre-table, a writing-desk, and a pretty work-table, a few valuable pictures and ornaments, a piano—which it was Bessie's great trial that she could not play upon—plenty of easy-chairs, and a glowing fire in the wide, polished grate. The dining-room, back of the drawing-room, was as pleasant in its way. It looked very attractive now, the table being spread with the tasteful dinner appointments, and

the crimson curtains drawn, shutting the cold from the plants in the deep bay-window.

Bessie soon lost all patience at seeing her brother calmly walk about with his hands in his pockets, looking at things he had looked at a hundred times before, and she ran to him and drew him to a seat between her mother and herself:

"Now, begin! we can't bear the suspense another instant. Stephen isn't engaged, I know. He won't marry before he is forty, if he ever does, and he hasn't been elected President, or king of the Cannibal Islands—What is it?"

"You talk so much you give me no time to tell, Bess."

"My dear boy, don't tease us so," said Mrs. Hollister, her cheeks flushed with her eagerness to hear the news.

"I won't mother! I was paying off some of my old scores against Bess, but I ought not to torment you, too. The truth is, Stephen has made a stride towards—success, at least, if not fame and fortune."

"How?—do tell us quickly."

"Very well: you know that Stephen was admitted to the bar some three months ago?"

"Of course, we know that!"

"And you know that since then he has been in the office of Bodley & Scription?"

"Yes, yes! You will drive us wild with your preliminaries."

"And you know that it is usual for young lawyers to plod along, doing the odds and ends of office work, having no chance at anything responsible or important until they have served a long apprenticeship at the odds and ends?"

"Yes."

"Well, Messrs. Bodley & Scription had a very important case on hand, which was lost in one court and was to be taken to the Court of Appeals, but there seemed no chance of success; all authorities and precedents seemed in favor of the defendant, Bodley & Scription being for the plaintiff. No strong points could be found on their side, and one would naturally suppose that what their shrewd eyes failed to see didn't exist. But to make a short story shorter"—

"Stephen saw something that they *didn't* see!" cried Bessie, triumphantly.

"Exactly! and the result was that the thing was put into Stephen's hands, and he has gone to Albany to-day to argue the case, and therefore won't be here to dinner."

"How splendid? I knew that boy would be famous! When did you know about it first?"

"That that boy was going to be famous?"

"No, no! but about his having the case to argue!"

"Some three weeks ago, I believe."

"I never knew anything so shameful as your keeping it from mother and me all this time, did you, mother! And Stephen's posting off to Albany without saying he was going, or good-by!"

"He didn't know that he was to go till he got down town and found that he was booked for to-morrow; and I suppose mother was gone when he got home, and he hadn't time to come here. The reason Stephen didn't tell you about the case, or let me, was that he thought you both, especially mother, would be anxious as to his success, and"—

"I don't think I should have had any fears for that," said Mrs. Hollister.

"But you would have been troubled if you had known how he was working to prepare for it. And then, you know, Stephen is a queer fellow, anyhow; he can't bear to have even you and Bessie in an excitement over him. I shouldn't have heard a word from him, any more than you; young Bodley, who is an enthusiastic admirer of his, told me, and told me, besides, some things his father had said about him."

"What things?" demanded Bessie.

"As to Stephen's abilities, and the likelihood of his doing something worth while, by-and-by."

"When will Stephen come back?" Bessie asked, her eyes sparkling with pleasure.

"If the case comes on to-morrow, as he expected, he will be at home the day after, I suppose; but it is uncertain, and you had better possess your souls in patience."

"When he comes, will the case have been decided?"

"Probably not for some time after."

"Well, no matter, we know he will gain it. How late Gregory is! I wish he would come, I want to"—

"To tell him? I believe one of the weaknesses you used to deride and scoff at, was wives telling their husbands everything that happens," said Henry, laughing.

"I deride it now. I don't tell Gregory everything—*anything* that happens in the kitchen, when I change my cook, or when a dish is broken; and if Mrs. John Smith should come to me and confide that her husband was cruel to her, or Miss Smith should tell me that she had had an unhappy love affair, I shouldn't retail it to Gregory. But when I hear something that will make him as happy and proud as it does me, I shall *always* tell him the very first chance I have; and I'll go and do it now, for I hear his key in the door."

Bessie hastened to meet her husband, and would only give him time to say a word of welcome to her mother and Henry, before she took him up-stairs to prepare for dinner, and to hear the news the while.

When they returned to the drawing-room, Mrs. Frisby was seated in solemn state by the fire.

"Why, Aunt Frisby!" cried Bessie, "how came you to leave your friend so early?"

"It looked like snow, Elizabeth, and I didn't wish to be caught out in it. How is the child?" Mrs. Frisby asked this in a portentous tone, as if she should not be surprised to hear that he was in the last stage of some dangerous disease.

"He seemed pretty well when I saw him last," answered Bessie, "he hasn't had any spasms since you have been gone."

Later in the evening, when Mrs. Frisby, as was her custom, had fallen asleep in her easy chair, in spite of her firm intention to the contrary, the pleasant tidings in regard to Stephen were talked over, and then Mr. Schuyler said:

"I heard a piece of news to-day that will interest you, Bessie, and I imagine it won't surprise you much, as I believe you never held the young lady in very high esteem.—Grace Gellert has eloped—run away with a young Reynolds, who used to live in Oxley."

"Gregory!" cried Bessie, "when did it happen? how did you hear?"

"The young lady disappeared rather more than a week ago. It was kept very quiet while inquiries were being made, but it cannot be concealed any longer. For the first few days her friends could find no clew; but now it is proved that she was married to this Reynolds one Saturday, in a little church down town, and sailed the same day, in a French steamer, for Europe. I am very sorry for her friends."

"What sort of a man is Mr. Reynolds?" asked Mrs. Hollister; "of course, he isn't a good man; but is he likely to treat her kindly and make her happy?"

"Happy!" cried Bessie, "such a woman isn't capable of happiness. She may feel a sort of satisfaction if her husband indulges her whims, and if she has plenty of money and her vanity is gratified by homage in society; but—Oh!—how terrible!" Bessie suddenly exclaimed:—"she was engaged!—don't you remember Stephen's telling us?—to a Mr. Donovan, whom she met first in Rome, and who followed her to Switzerland, and was so devoted? Could even Grace Gellert be so heartless, so base?"

"It is even so, dear, and I should say he was well rid of her."

"Oh, but he won't, he *can't* see it so, at first, at least," cried Bessie; "I only wish he might know at once just what she is, and that he might despise her. I hope he is with friends."

"His mother and father live in this country, you know," said Henry.

"Alas, alas!" sighed Bessie. "How did you hear of it, Gregory?—you didn't tell us."

"Mr. Craighead came to me, as his lawyer, to learn if Miss Gellert's fortune, from her mother, could be secured to her now."

"Could it?"

"Not without her husband's approval. As to the father's property in Paris, Mr. Reynolds himself will look after that; his marrying an heiress in the morning and starting for Paris in the afternoon, leads one to conclude so."

"Will Mr. Craighead take any measures to bring Grace back?" asked Bessie.

"No, she was legally married, and, from all evidence, chose deliberately, and there is nothing to be done."

"How lonely her poor aunt will be," said Mrs. Hollister; "she has no one now, has she? I wonder if Alexandra will come to take Grace's place?"

"Perhaps she will—well, aunt, have you had a pleasant nap?"—Mrs. Frisby having opened her eyes at the bringing in of the tea-things.

"I haven't been asleep, Elizabeth. I may have lost myself for a minute or so, but most of the time I have been meditating. You always think I'm asleep if I am in thought."

"I only wish I had your power of abstraction, aunt. I could no more have fixed my mind in meditation, with two or three people talking of such thrilling items as have absorbed us to-night, than I could go to sleep with a drum beating in the same room."—Mrs. Frisby showed signs of disturbance, to Bessie's inward satisfaction.

Stephen was detained in Albany for two or three days, and declared, when he came home and found what a hero he was in the eyes of his mother and Bessie, that Henry had made a great deal out of a very little.

The case was decided in favor of Bodley & Scripton, and they learned, not through Stephen, that the Court had complimented him upon his "Brief," and expressed great interest in the point Stephen had brought out so clearly.

In the course of two months Stephen's name was added to the firm, which was then Bodley, Scripton & Hollister.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE SPIDER AND THE FLY.

IN the depression caused by the discomforts and dangers of a stormy winter voyage, Grace had many remorseful feelings as to the rash step she had taken; and even a few little misgivings as to the superlative fascinations of him with whom she had braved so much. But when once she breathed the air of Paris, and found herself in charming rooms in the Hotel Meyerbeer, looking out on the Champs Elysees, though it was at first through mist and drizzling rains, her remorse and fears vanished, and she counted herself the happiest of mortals.

Martin, at the same time, ceased to wonder if his bride really possessed all the sweetness and devotion to himself that he had given her credit for, and was more in love with her than ever; so that the honeymoon, which had seemed rather dim at its rising, at length shone very satisfactorily.

Grace would have liked at once to begin the search for friends of her father's, of whom she was sure there must be some who would serve as stepping-stones to the social triumphs she so eagerly anticipated. But in Martin's view there was something more important, even, than attending upon his young bride, and when he could not go with her, he took it for granted that she would not care to go, even with the delightful people who crossed in the same steamer, and were at the same hotel, and would always have been glad to have Grace join them.

There is room for doubt whether these proofs of her husband's appreciation of her charms fully repaid Grace for the lonely hours she spent looking out upon the tops of carriages and dripping umbrellas. But she found some alleviation in the plans and dreams that filled her head, and in admiring the daily results of her friends' coveted shopping opportunities, and in the prospect of profiting by their experiences.

One evening she had a foretaste of the realization of her dreams: a party was made up to go to the Opera, and at Martin's desire Grace wore the pink silk and pearls, in which he had seen her first after their long separation. The ladies of the party thought her "enchanted," as they confided to her husband in her hearing; and Grace was quite sure that if she had not

been married, and the gentlemen themselves had not been married, they would have been at her feet at once. As it was, she thought Martin monopolized her more than was quite necessary, even considering how lately they were married. In the midst of elegantly dressed women, it was no small triumph to find herself the observed of many observers—to see lorgnettes constantly bent upon her, and to hear Martin assured that his wife was taking Paris by storm. She was not sure whether Martin was altogether gratified or not; but she thought, suppose he were a little jealous?—all the better; it would be nice to have that means of gaining her points, if he should ever prove hard to manage.

This taste of the sweets of gayety and success gave her a feverish thirst for more, and made her impatient for a fair beginning of the career she saw before her; but she felt no impulse to confide her longings to Martin. Her instinct led her to seem quite contented to wait until he had disposed of the matters of business that were, to his mind, so all-important, and until it was decided where and how they should live. She supposed the choice lay between staying where they were, which would have satisfied her ideas of style quite well for the present, or taking an elegant apartment, with plenty of accomplished servants, where she could entertain the *élite* whom she, in visions, already saw thronging her rooms. She and Martin had exchanged no opinions on the subject, however, and her expectations were founded entirely upon her wishes. Somehow, whenever she attempted to talk of plans, she was petted and laughed at, and promised the gratification of every reasonable wish.

They had been for three weeks at the Hotel Meyerbeer; their steamer friends had finished their shopping and gone away; there had been a few bright days, in which Martin had taken time to go about with Grace—to the Bois de Boulogne, one Sunday to Versailles to see the fountains play, and they had even spent an hour or two at the Compagnie des Indes, looking at laces and India shawls, when one day—one of the sunny days—Martin stood beside Grace as she sat at the window, dividing her attention between him and the gay scene without: “What a pity it is that we can’t afford to stay here, pet, you enjoy it so much!” he said, playing with her curls, while he watched the streams of carriages and the throngs of well-dressed people that gave the streets such a holiday air.

Grace looked up quickly into his face, and took his hand to draw him around in front of her; but he took hers instead, and drew her away from the window and seated her upon his knee.

“Can’t we afford it, Martin?” she asked eagerly; “I don’t see why we can’t.”

“Of course, you don’t, *petite*; women can never understand such things, and that is why they need husbands who are able to. If a woman wants a thousand dollar shawl she thinks she can have it perfectly well, though she has but five hundred to pay for it. Of course, pet, we can’t stay here. We are spending as much in a day as we ought to spend in a week—does that make it plain to you?—But you needn’t look so terrified, as if I had said we were going to starve. We shall enjoy our fortune, if we get it, all the more for having been plain, quiet people for a while, and shall live very comfortably in the meantime.”

“If we get it?” said Grace, catching at the doubt expressed, and with a vague feeling, besides, of dissatisfaction with the cool use of the possessive pronoun—“You don’t mean that there is any uncertainty about it, do you?”

“There is a degree of uncertainty in all things human, *ma chère*,” Martin replied lightly. “I hope for the best, and shall do my best for both our sakes, as I think we both have a decided taste for the good things that money brings; but in the meantime we must not spend as if the hundreds of thousands were already secured, and we had nothing to do but enjoy them. I shall have to work, and my little wife will have to do without expensive dresses and stylish apartments for a time, and be satisfied with a plain home and her husband’s love. Will she?” he asked, laying her small hand on his long slender fingers and stroking it, while he looked into her eyes until they fell before his steady gaze.

Grace never had felt so dumb and helpless in her life before, except when Martin was urging her to a secret marriage and flight. There were plenty of things in her mind to say: questions to ask, and plans to propose, and situations to protest against; yet she answered meekly, when it seemed to her that Martin never would speak again until she did, “I suppose if it is necessary I can be economical and contented—but Martin”—

“Well, *petite*.”

“Nothing—only”—

“You are a dear, sensible little girl, to agree to be economical and contented,” Martin said, “and we shall be as happy as if we were already rolling in riches. So to-morrow we will leave these luxurious quarters and go to our humbler ones in Rue d’Hauteville”—

“Why, have you engaged an apartment?” asked Grace, in dismay.

"*Oui, ma chère,*" Martin replied smilingly. "I saw the sign, '*Appartements à louer,*' and found this suite to be within our means, and as desirable as we could hope for at our moderate maximum, and so I engaged it. It is quite well furnished, and the servant who lived with the family that had just left it was willing to remain, so I engaged her as well. She is a staid, elderly female, who will be just the sort of person to look after my pretty wife when I am away."

"Are we to have only one servant?" asked Grace in a choked voice.

"Only one *petite*? Why, we could not manage more than one, even if we could afford to pay her wages. Our suite is not an extensive one, you know."

"How many—what rooms are there?"

"Let me see: a parlor, say a quarter the size of this; a dining-room much the same size as the parlor, a bed-room, and a kitchen, so-called by courtesy. There is a place for Françoise in the attic, somewhere. It is not palatial you see, sweet, but it is clean and comfortable, and we must love each other enough to make up for what we lack in elegance."

Martin had taken the course he regarded as the wisest—the most likely to do away, for all time, with discussions and scenes. He considered it preëminently the wife's privilege to confide and trust, and the husband's to be confided in and trusted; and while he felt really sorry to disappoint Grace's bright anticipations, he desired to establish the best precedent for the future, and so had arranged everything, and taken her acquiescence for granted.

But if he expected her to show no feeling at the overthrow of her hopes, he expected more than was reasonable, and he had no right to be surprised, when she suddenly broke into sobs. She would have left his knee, but he held her, saying, pleasantly, "Sit still, *petite*; why should you go away because you feel badly? It is hard, I know, for a gay little humming-bird like you to have to settle down in a crow's nest, instead of flitting about among the flowers; but I don't see any help for it, as long as she chose to fly away with the crow, do you?"

"I didn't think—I thought we could do a great deal more with what—we have, here than we could in New York," sobbed Grace.

"Why, so we can, pet. In New York, one room in a second-rate boarding-house would be all we could aspire to, and here we can keep house respectably, while we wait for our ship to come in. We might be worse off, don't you think so?"

"It doesn't matter what I think, as long as there is no help

for it," Grace replied; and considering that her whole soul was in rebellion against being "buried alive," as she inwardly called it, and against the calm appropriation and disposal of what was solely hers, her answer was a model of forbearance.

Martin did not feel altogether satisfied; but he would not be hard on the dear child, he thought, so he responded cheerfully, "What can't be cured had best be endured as philosophically as possible—*n'est ce pas, ma chère?*"

"I suppose so"—

"Then we will wipe away these foolish tears, and have no more of them"—he had taken her handkerchief, and dried her tears while he held her hands—"and you will always be my pretty, bright-eyed pet. Why, don't you know, Gracie, that crying would spoil your beauty?" he asked, smiling. "You wouldn't like to look faded and melancholy, any better than I should like to have you; do you think you would?—When you are ready to take your place as a queen of society, you would like, I know, to be as lovely as you are now. No one enjoys more the consciousness of the power beauty gives, than does my little wife, and she is not going to be so foolish as to mar hers by discontent and moping, is she? I shouldn't know her, with dull eyes and faded complexion, in place of these violets and lilies, and roses and dimples."

Grace had listened with downcast eyes, playing with Martin's watch chain, until she felt a smile stealing upon her lips; then she suddenly put her arms about his neck and hid her face on his shoulder. Martin, elated at his success, and quite at ease as to anything that might come up in the future, petted her, and took her to an entertainment in the Champs Élysees that evening.

The next day they took possession of their new home, Grace feeling, as they mounted the interminable stairs, very much as if she were going to execution, or as she imagined she should feel if she were taking the veil; and when she saw Françoise, with her sharp features and bright round eyes, in her immaculate dress and cap and apron, she thought of what Martin had said, that she was just the one to look after his pretty wife when he was away, and she began to detest her on the spot.

It was nothing unusual, however, for her not to act as she felt, and having no desire to make herself disagreeable to Martin, she laughed and talked and examined into the mysteries of her small *ménage*, and peered down into the narrow street, only pouting prettily when she found she could see nothing—was, indeed, so gay and sunny that Martin was charmed: he had no idea, he said, that his humming-bird would

take so kindly to her crow's nest, but he had made up his mind now that he might look for some new development of sweetness in her every day.

She would not even cry when Martin left her for a time, for fear her eyes should be red and dull when he came home; but she sat, the picture of misery, gazing at the tall houses opposite, hardly moving for an hour or more, and answering Françoise petulantly, when she came to ask what Madame would have done with her evening dresses.

"Leave them folded in the trunks; I shall never want them, here."

They fell at once into the French fashion of taking coffee and rolls in the morning, and breakfasting at noon; and for the first month they took their breakfast and dinner at a *café* near by. Grace liked that arrangement very much; it made two events, in days that were otherwise eventless, unless Martin had leisure to walk or drive with her. They were seldom at home evenings; there were plenty of inexpensive entertainments that Martin endured for Grace's sake, and that Grace accepted as being better than nothing, but with secret bitterness at the poor mockery of that of which she had dreamed.

She was anxious to know what he was doing, and what he had found out about the property. Two or three times she asked him questions, and told him she thought he ought to let her know how affairs progressed; but he laughed at her, and caressed her, calling her his little humming-bird, or his pet, whose little head was not to be bothered with "affairs;" and Grace felt it to be useless to expect any enlightenment, though she was none the less discontented at her ignorance. After a time she began to consider the possibility of paying a secret visit to the lawyers whom she had seen with her Uncle William, when the family were in Paris so long ago; but there were difficulties attending such a project, one of which was that Martin had requested her never to go into the street, in his absence, without Françoise.

Her dislike for that person was not very active, Françoise being always respectful and attentive; but Grace could not rid herself of the feeling that those sharp black eyes were appointed to watch her, and that they were very vigilant. A walk with Françoise was one of the few things that could help to fill up the hours of her husband's absence, and it was the variety of which she least cared to avail herself. Day-dreams, that were as often pictures of what had been, as of what should be by-and-by, reading, and dressing for Martin's return, were her chief occupations. Twice, in the early days of their house-keeping,

Martin, who was extremely punctual and systematic, found Grace still in her blue wrapper, absorbed in a dream or a book, when he came to take her to breakfast; but she found it so much pleasanter to have smiles and caresses, than such looks and tones as might be bestowed upon one who was not pretty or sweet, or dear, that she did not let it happen again.

One day, while they sat at their dinner in the *café*, watching the people come and go, and keeping up a pleasant flow of talk, Martin saw the color deepen in Grace's cheeks and her eyes soften, and saw her bow to some one; and as he looked to see who it could be, a young man left a table, on the other side of the room, and came towards theirs. Grace put out her hand eagerly, and greeted him warmly, so glad to see a familiar face, and in such a pleasant little flutter of excitement over it, that she quite forgot, for a time, to introduce her husband; and when she did turn to do so, there was an expression in the greenish gray eyes that made her ask as soon as possible,

"How is your wife, Mr. Cræsus?—oh, I beg your pardon—Mr. Blake!"

She was overcome with confusion for an instant, but it passed away as Mr. Blake laughed pleasantly at her mistake, and replied that his wife was well, that she was in Rome at present. He waited to chat for a minute or two, and on leaving them to go back to his friend, asked if he might come to see them; he should be in Paris a week or two longer, and he should like to talk over those bright days in Switzerland, with Mrs. Reynolds.

Grace blushed a little, and said she should be glad to have him come, and her husband politely seconded the assurance, and gave him their address.

When he was gone, Grace hastened to speak of his having been engaged at the time they travelled together, and of its having been so nice for her to have just such a friendly acquaintance to save her from Mr. Donovan's persistent attentions; and she explained how she came to call him Mr. *Cræsus*, wondering all the time at herself for not having the slightest inclination to make Martin jealous, when she had always held it one of the pleasantest pastimes with her other lovers.

Martin remarked that Mr. Blake seemed very much amazed at being introduced to him as her *husband*. Grace laughed, and said, naturally enough, since the last time he had seen or heard of her, she had not a thought of being married.

"Oh, you were not engaged to Donovan then, *petite*?"

"No, indeed! After he left us—I couldn't help myself."

"What a sad flirt has my little wife been! what a many hearts she has broken!" ejaculated Martin, with a smile and

shake of his head. "I shall have to guard her well when she is in society again. She is safe enough now, in her cage under the eaves."

"You ought to love me a great deal to make up for all the good times and lovers I have lost," said Grace, with an almost timid wistfulness.

"I do, my sweet, I do—do you dare to doubt it? The ground that you walk on I love, I'll be bound."

"Martin, I'd rather you'd love me than the ground," returned Grace, gaily.

In the evening, while Martin read the papers and the rain fell without, Grace sat gazing into the meagre fire of coals that the frugal Françoise allowed them, lost in a dream of "those bright days," and was aroused from a vivid picture of herself in Brooke's arms, that night after the excitement of his despairing departure and happy return, by her husband's saying, "Well, Grace, what are you thinking about?—a penny for your thoughts!"

"Oh—I—I believe I was half-asleep," she cried, starting up; and when she saw that he was watching her with a steady look of inquiry, she ran to him and, perched upon his knee, set herself to beguile him of all thoughts but of her charms, and her love for him, and she was fully satisfied with her success.

It happened that it rained for several days after this, and Grace had no cause to wonder, either that their breakfasts and dinners were brought in from the *café*, or that Croesus did not make his appearance, though the days seemed interminable. But when the sun shone again, and Martin told her that he thought it much better that Françoise should do all the cooking, that she was fully competent, and they were always liable to bad weather, and that such a Bohemian style of living did not suit his ideas, she had a sharp suspicion that the change was made with a view to keeping her more secluded, and a petulant protest rose to her lips. But she was afraid to utter it, lest Martin should discover how much she had been living upon that chance meeting with Mr. Blake—what bright little hopes of future diversions of the same kind she had built upon it.

She found it easier to bear this new trial, at least to seem contented at the time, from the certainty she felt of seeing Mr. Blake now; and all that day and evening, and all the next day and evening, she listened for him momently. When Martin was at home she concealed her eager expectation, but when she was alone she walked the floor, stood at the window, from which she could just see the tops of people's heads, so far down that they looked like flies, looked in the glass a hundred times, to

assure herself that no one could think her less pretty than when she was in Europe before, and grew sick at heart over the hope deferred, though it was so trifling, as one might think.

By the third day her restlessness was desperate, and no wonder, for she had not been out of her "cage under the eaves" in more than a week; and when Martin had taken his coffee and bade her a tender good-by, saying that he should not be back to breakfast on account of urgent business, she dressed herself hastily, feeling that she should stife to be shut up any longer, and in her bonnet and shawl informed Françoise calmly that she was going out, and she need not prepare breakfast for her or Monsieur, as neither of them would be at home.

Françoise's eyes twinkled, and she came very near shrugging her shoulders: "Was Madame going alone?"

"Yes, I am, Françoise," Grace replied with dignity.

"If I have no breakfast to prepare, I might go with Madame," Françoise suggested. "I am certain Monsieur would be better pleased than if Madame went out alone, he is so very jealous of the eyes that gaze at her charming face."

"Don't trouble yourself, my good Françoise," Grace replied in a gentler tone; "I am not afraid. I am married, you know, and wear a shawl. I shall be safely at home before Monsieur knows of my being out, so he cannot worry."

Françoise did shrug her shoulders when Grace's back was turned, and when there was plenty of time for her to have reached the street, she hurried down to have a gossip with the concierge about "*la belle Americaine*," and her "*mari barbare*." The two *grisons* wondered if all American husbands were as strict, and gave their wives as little liberty as Monsieur Reynolds did. It was by no means the first time they had exchanged sentiments and items of information on the subject, and Françoise knew what Grace did not: that the concierge had received imperative orders to admit no one to see Madame in Monsieur's absence. Neither of them believed Monsieur's statement that it was Madame's wish; but the concierge displayed a gold Napoleon, and Françoise knew that Madame was safe from all intruders, whether she wished it or not.

CHAPTER XLV.

DREAMS AND REALITIES.

IN the mean time Grace made her way out of the narrow street, that was so dreary to her, and that to live in was so humiliating, with all haste, rejoicing, tremblingly, to be sure, but still rejoicing in her liberty, and determined to make the most of it; for she knew as well as Françoise and the concierge did, that Martin would be annoyed, and that it might be her only venture. There seemed really very little, after all, that she could do, except walk on the Boulevards and shop in a small way; but having gone as far as the Rue Vivienne she concluded to go through to the Palais Royal. From the time she was a child in Paris, and her old *bonne* used to take her there to hear the music, and see the pretty things, it had been enchanted ground to her. It had not lost its charm for her now, and she walked through the arcades, undismayed by the curious glances that rested upon her, enjoying the brilliant displays in the windows, and feeling quite safe, because she knew the place so well.

She went into one of the shops to buy an inexpensive little trinket that took her fancy, and when she came out she thought her fortunate star in the ascendant, for she met Cræsus face to face.

"Mrs. Reynolds! and alone!" he exclaimed, as Grace, with a smile and a joyful ejaculation, held out her hand to him.

"Yes, I ran away, because I was so dreadfully tired of staying in the house, and Mr. Reynolds was out for all day; and I hate to walk with Françoise, like a child with her *bonne*. Are you very much shocked?"

"Not at all, as it has given me the pleasure of meeting you."

"Why haven't you been to see me, as you promised? I have looked for you every day," Grace said, as they walked slowly along together.

"Why, Mrs. Reynolds!—I have been three times to ask for you! And each time have been told that Madame was not at home."

Grace shook her head, and turned pale with self-pity, as she thought of those long days of waiting. Mr. Blake had had his

own suspicions, remembering the cold glitter of Mr. Reynolds's eyes; but he went on:

"Yes, I called three times, fearing that I might seem too persistent, yet not liking to give it up! Yesterday I wanted to ask you and Mr. Reynolds to share with me a box at the Opera, that a friend had placed at my disposal. You received my cards, didn't you?"

"No—it is too much," said Grace, unable to keep back the tears.

"Those French concierges are so abominably careless!" said Cræsus. "But never mind, I am glad I have met you now, as I have an idle morning on my hands as well as you, and we can spend it together. Have you been to the Louvre?"

"Not this time."

"Well, let us go there—do you care for pictures?"

"Yes, very much."

So they went to the Louvre, and spent the morning in looking at pictures and talking. They found a great deal to talk about; they seemed like old and intimate friends, to Grace, and in her child-like way, she confided to her companion her runaway marriage, her grief as to her present life in Paris, and her hopes of having her fortune when she came of age, and being happier then.

"You will let me take you to breakfast," he said, when they suddenly discovered that it was after twelve o'clock. "I leave Paris to-morrow, and for old acquaintance's sake you will not refuse?"

Grace did demur a little, but the temptation was too great, and she consented.

As they sat in the *café*, Mr. Blake asked if she heard often from the other members of their Swiss club. Grace replied, her heart in a flutter:

"I have not heard—from some of them in a long time; indeed, from any of them."

"Mrs. Lowe and her son are in Rome; I saw them there not many weeks ago. They were well, and Mr. Lowe was working successfully at his art. By the way, is he engaged to Miss Craighead?"

"Oh, no! there was nothing in that. It was only a summer flirtation, at least on Miss Craighead's part."

"It was quite evident that Mr. Lowe cared for her—poor fellow! it was rather hard upon him, don't you think so?"

"He will get over it; people always do. Such things have to happen," answered Grace, trying to speak carelessly.

"Oh, I dare say he will get over it, and of course such things

must happen. Every beautiful woman has a right to two or three victims, at least; it is the tribute men must pay to the supremacy of feminine charms, and we ought not to grudge it. The Forsyths are in Rome, too, or were when I left there."

"I suppose I have seen Mr. Craighead since you have, as he went home with us to attend his sister's wedding," Grace said. "Then there were Mr. Hollister and the Leightons—did you meet them?"

"I just saw them at the Riffel, not to make their acquaintance at all, however. And who else was there?—ah, I see you recall the last on the list, Mrs. Reynolds," Mr. Blake said, smiling, as Grace blushed and cast down her eyes;—one of those unfortunate victims, and a very desperate case."

"Oh, he is heart-whole by this time," returned Grace, still blushing, and without looking up.

"I am very sure he was not when I saw him in Rome, a few weeks ago," said Mr. Blake, watching Grace's face, having a good-natured desire to gratify her, if, as he believed, she were anxious to hear news of her discarded lover, and having at the same time some curiosity to see what effect his news would have.

"He hadn't—heard then, had he?" asked Grace in a low tone.

"No, of course he had not heard. We were both in blissful ignorance that some one else had stolen you away, and when I recognized you in nearly every face in his studio—in these violet eyes, in this mouth, in that blonde hair, here altogether—like Andrea del Sarto and his Lucretia, I took the liberty to speak of you, and ask after you"—Grace said nothing, and Mr. Blake went on—"and by the brightening of his eyes and the glow that overspread his face at the mention of your name, I could readily guess at the state of his heart."

"I couldn't help it," said Grace, looking up with childlike appeal in her face and voice.

"I know it, my dear Mrs. Reynolds. You could no more help his loving you than flowers and gems can help enchanting the senses. I am the last one to blame a pretty woman for the wounds she inflicts on men's hearts, as I said before. Mr. Donovan left Rome, a few days after I saw him, quite suddenly, having been called to Ireland, where I believe his father's relatives live—do they not?"

"Yes."

"Perhaps I am telling you as news something that you already know?" Mr. Blake suggested.

"No—I have heard nothing," Grace answered, with a touch of impatience in her tones.

"Well, then, he went to Ireland to take possession of an estate that had been left him—so Mrs. Lowe told me—by a bachelor great-uncle. It was rather a curious freak on the part of the old man, as he had seen very little of Brooke, and there were several nephews and nieces belonging to other branches of the family, who had been—disinterestedly, of course!—devoted to him for years. Brooke was no less surprised than they, but of course rejoiced in his good luck, and all his friends rejoiced with him, and I am certain no one deserved it more than he. The property was very large, including a fine old seat, with pictures and plate, and so forth, of great value, so that our friend will be a gentleman of leisure hereafter, and can pursue his art as a pastime. I suppose he is at home, that is, in America, now, as he was to sail as soon as he had taken formal possession of his estates. His parents live in New York, do they not?"

"I don't know—oh yes, I think so," Grace stammered, with pale lips and bewildered eyes.

Mr. Blake had seen the gradual fading of the bright color, and the suspicion that had already crossed him, notwithstanding her naïve assurance that she had cared for Mr. Reynolds three or four years, though she didn't know it all the time—gathered strength; he was positive now that she had deluded herself, been dazzled by visions of riches and Paris delights. He felt very sorry for her, but he looked upon all sorts of suffering as among the inevitables, to be met and got through with as speedily as possible; so he did not regret having told the news, and sincerely hoped Mrs. Reynolds would not take her mistake too much to heart, and that she and her husband would soon settle into the usual comfortably common-place relations of husbands and wives.

Grace felt utterly desolate at the thought of not seeing Cræsus again. Was he really going away to-morrow?—The sweet lips quivered, and the blue eyes were full of tears as she asked the question.

They were in the Rue d'Hauteville at the time, and Mr. Blake was considering whether he might not, out of pity for this forlorn little creature, delay his departure, and try to do something for her innocent pleasure, when his eyes rested upon a figure in the distance, up the narrow street, the sight of which arrested the words of encouragement he was about to utter. He saw that Grace had not noticed the figure yet, and thinking they must meet, he said cheerfully:

"Is not that your husband, coming towards us, Mrs. Reynolds?"

"Where?—where?" exclaimed Grace, in a terrified voice, looking around.

But the man, whoever it was, had disappeared, and Mr. Blake said, "It couldn't have been Mr. Reynolds, after all, for he must have recognized you, and would come to meet us."—Grace agreed with him, and dismissed her fears.—"Yes, I believe I must go to-morrow, but I shall be in Paris again before long, with my wife, and you may be sure we shall find you speedily; under her protection, I think I should venture to brave the old concierge and mount the stairs, even if she came after us with a broomstick, and worse still, with her French tongue. But I think I had better say good-by here, in case her lynx eyes are watching for your return."

So they shook hands cordially, two or three doors from Grace's house; and Cæsus walked quickly on to the Boulevard, having little question that the person he had seen was Mr. Reynolds, and that he had seen them, and wondering how he would treat his poor little wife. He thought there was but small likelihood of any rude outburst of anger; those eyes were too cold, and the polish too conscious, for that; but there might be something worse—cutting taunts and cruel coldness. "Foolish child! she had better have lived on a crust, with Donovan, than have married that vampire, if he owned a gold mine," was his summing up of the case.

The sight of the concierge, when she opened the door, brought a flash of indignation to the surface of Grace's agitations, and she turned to her, when the door was shut, asking sharply, "Why have you told my friend, Mr. Blake, three times that I was not at home, when you knew perfectly that I was?"

"Ah, just heaven!" cried the woman, clasping her hands and casting up her eyes; "surely, Madame cannot believe that I would do such a thing! I have heard no gentleman ask for her. I would be only too glad to admit many of Madame's friends, I am so sorry for her loneliness."

"Your husband, then, must be to blame," said Grace, puzzled, but not convinced. "I know that Mr. Blake came here three times, and each time was sent away, and I have not even received his card."

"Pardon, Madame, but my husband never would *dare*, and he would not *wish* to do so wicked a thing. He adores Madame; he looks through the crack to see her pass; we would *die* for the beautiful American lady, and she thinks so ill of us! Will she not condescend to believe it?—certainly, no gentleman has asked for her.—I *swear* it to you, Madame."

Grace was in danger of bursting into tears of perplexity and

misery, and to save herself, turned hastily from the fawning, plausible concierge, and went up the stairs, which seemed longer and steeper than ever, and the thought of the "apology for a home," at the top, more utterly hateful. She was filled with a burning sense of injury, and was determined to reproach Martin, and let him know that she could not and would not live so, shut up in a dingy attic, at the mercy of a careless or wicked old concierge.

But when she opened the door into the little parlor, and saw Martin, sitting by the window reading the paper, her wrath suddenly cooled, and chilly sensations crept over her.

Martin looked up, and smiled and nodded, and that gave Grace courage to go to him. He took no further notice of her, however, and so she leaned on the back of his chair.

"I ran away, Martin, didn't I?" she said, resting her chin on his head for an instant.

"Yes, *petite*, so it appears."

"I got so dreadfully tired of staying in the house;—I hadn't been out for more than a week, you know, and the day was so long without you!"

"What time did you go out?"

"I really don't know.—It seemed ages after you left me."

"Did it? Françoise thought it was very soon after; I hope the minutes don't always seem hours in my absence; the most exacting lover couldn't desire that. Why didn't you take Françoise with you, *petite*?"

"I didn't want her—I detest to have her walk with me," Grace answered with some irritation, for she was thinking that Françoise had lost no time in telling her tales. She added more amiably, "How do you think you would like always to have a valet to attend you when you go out, Martin?"

"If it were good usage I think I could submit to it," replied Martin, "and women are supposed to be more bound by usage than men, even."

"Then you think my going out alone, just for once, was a dreadful thing?" said Grace after a pause.

"No;—it might create a little scandal if it were known that you were out with a man who was not received at your own house, but as no one will know it except myself and the concierge and Françoise, and their *bons vivants*, it doesn't matter. You see there are advantages in our being unknown, *ma chère*."

Grace was speechless, a moment, for Martin must have seen her with Mr. Blake; it must have been Martin whom Mr. Blake had seen, and he must have avoided meeting them.

"I happened to meet Mr. Blake in the Palais Royal," she

said at length, with an effort, "and he took me to the Louvre to look at pictures, and then to breakfast.—You *know* I couldn't have *expected* to meet him, when I haven't heard a word from him."

"Of course I know it, *petite*. Did he tell you that he had been here three times, and been sent away?"

"Yes, Martin;—did you"—

"I am responsible, *ma chère*. I suppose you have been very wrathful with the poor *grison* down stairs, but it was unjust. I gave orders that nobody should be admitted in my absence, because I thought that a little lady who was as given to flirting as you, should be spared the temptation. But your adventurous spirit nullified my prudent measures."

Grace felt wrought up to the last degree: eager to defend herself, ready to break into upbraidings and reproaches—outraged almost beyond endurance, yet feeling herself helpless, knowing instinctively that tears and wild words would be worse than useless; she seemed to have forgotten all her arts, and was bewildered and at a loss. She broke the long silence desperately at last, and Martin stopped reading, and leaned his head back to listen:

"I told you that Mr. Blake was engaged when we were in Switzerland, and you know he is married now. It isn't likely I should care to flirt with him, even if I were as fond of flirting as you think. It isn't very kind of you—I don't see why you married me, if you couldn't trust me. I don't believe you love me."—Grace said this last in a choked voice.

"It wasn't necessary that I should think you perfect in order to love you, *chérie*; I never did fancy saintly women. I knew you had some little feminine foibles, and expected, and still expect, to make the best of them; and it was with that view that I made the arrangement with the concierge, and advised you not to go out without Françoise. I didn't want to have your affections unsettled, you see, *petite*, at the outset of our married life. I wanted you to get in the way of receiving only my devotions, while we were living quietly—a sort of preparation for the temptations you may meet by-and-by, when we are rich and gay and in society."—Martin's words had the effect to calm, somewhat, the excitement of Grace's mind, though his tone was light and careless, and he did not look at her.—"You did not marry *me* with the idea of my being perfection, did you, *petite*?" he asked lightly, as she said nothing. "Why did you marry me, by the way?"

"Because—I loved you, and thought you loved me," Grace replied, feeling that it was what ought to be the truth,

though her consciousness did not heartily respond to the statement.

"Very good, *chérie*, then I think there need be no trouble; when a woman loves her husband his wishes are her law, are they not?—and hers his, of course."

"Yes—but—I don't like being treated like a child."

"Ah, pet, but when a bird has proved itself to be fond of roaming, it can't expect to have as much liberty as if it never cared to use its wings. I wouldn't have you a barn-yard fowl, dull and common-place, but I wouldn't have you plume your bright feathers for anybody but myself."

"I think I have given *you* good reason to trust me," returned Grace, reproachfully.

"I am sorry you feel so disturbed, *petite*. I was surprised at seeing you in the street, just now, with Mr. Blake, and I might take *that* very much to heart, but I philosophically conclude that it will not happen again, and feel quite at ease. Did you arrange other meetings with your friend?"

"No, he leaves Paris to-morrow," Grace replied, trying to speak indifferently.

"Does he?—don't stand up any longer, *ma chère*; take off your bonnet and shawl, and come and tell me more about your little *escapade*."

Grace slowly obeyed, and when she was seated near him, Martin asked her where they breakfasted, and if she enjoyed the Louvre, and if they went anywhere else, and then asked if Mr. Blake had told her anything of her old friend, Mr. Donovan.

Grace had had no time to think fairly of the news she had heard of Brooke; her sensations in regard to it had been as yet vague and confused. It was not a thing of small moment, to be realized and measured at a glance; but all the time she had been standing behind Martin's chair, leaning against it and listening to his nonchalant tones and baffling words, there had been present to her inward sense a manly face, ardent tones, the gaze of eyes full of generous devotion, the pressure of arms that had enfolded her in a love strong as death. No wonder, then, that the sudden mention of his name made her heart beat wildly, and sent the blood in swift torrents to her face.

"O, yes!" she replied, as calmly as she could; "he told me that he had seen him in Rome not long ago.—The Lowes are there too, and the Forsyths."

"Are they?—Was Mr. Donovan well, and in good spirits?"

"Yes, he was well—Mr. Blake didn't say—oh, yes, he was in good spirits, too, I believe."

"I suppose he hadn't heard of your marriage, then, *petite*.—Did he tell you any other news of him?"

"Yes.—Did you know that he had had a fortune left him?" Grace forced herself to ask that, because something in Martin's manner made her think he did know it all.

"I heard of it some time ago, *ma chère*, but I refrained from telling you, because I feared you might have some misgivings as to having broken your engagement with him."

"What an idea, Martin!" cried Grace, with a nervous laugh.

She felt a sudden impulse to take refuge from herself in Martin's arms. She feared, she knew not what; she only knew that she was wretched, and needed to be saved from something. She half started from her chair, but Martin's look of cool scrutiny repelled her, and kept her seated, while her eyes fell, and her color went and came.

"I thought you would hear the tidings more complacently after we had our own fortune safely secured. Donovan will be a wonderful catch for somebody now, won't he?"

Grace did not see the look that came over her husband's face as he watched hers—the cold gleam that followed a lurid light in his eyes, the cruel smile that curled the thin lips, but she looked up as he rose from his seat.

"There is another item in regard to Mr. Donovan that Mr. Blake may not have learned yet, or may have left for you to hear from some one else. I have hated to tell you, knowing that it must prove a greater shock, even, than the fact of his having become rich; but I think perhaps now you had better know it; it may save you some vain regrets."

While Martin spoke he had been unlocking a drawer in his writing-desk, and came back with an American newspaper in his hand, which he gave to Grace, pointing to a certain paragraph.

"Is he married?" asked Grace, taking the paper with an unsteady hand, not looking at the place indicated.

"No, not married."

"Not *dead*? don't say that," ejaculated Grace in a horrified whisper, her face deadly pale.

"Come here, and let me tell you," Martin said, as Grace crumpled the paper and threw it from her. He felt some compunctions for the blow he was inflicting, and he drew her to his knee, though she resisted as if she hated his touch—saying to himself that it was better for her to learn the worst at once.

"Mr. Donovan came into possession of the fortune, as you know, and then sailed for America—don't shudder and look so

distracted, child; women can't marry all the men who love them, and they are not responsible for the consequences to those whom they don't marry. If you had married Brooke, you couldn't have married me, you know, and that would have broken your heart as well as mine; it was better his should be broken, wasn't it? Well, when he landed on the other side, and found, as he did immediately, of course, that you were already married—*petite*, I shall not dare to tell you, if you are going to feel it so much," he said, as she groaned, trembling like an aspen, and hid her white face in her hands.

"What else?" she asked in a whisper, when Martin had been silent some time.

"Do you think you can bear it, *petite*?"

"No, I *can't* bear it if he died, but I must hear," Grace answered sharply.

"Do you think you could have borne it if *I* had died?" Martin asked, with another lurid flash from his eyes. Grace did not move nor speak, and Martin went on: "As I said, he found you married and gone, and it made him desperate, and he committed a desperate deed:—he killed himself."

Grace uttered a wild shriek of horror, and fell back fainting in Martin's arms. For two weeks she was ill with a fever, constantly haunted by fearful visions, and tortured with self-upbraidings and remorse, and worse than all, when the fever was spent, by a clear consciousness that the best and only love that she had ever known, was given to him whom she had driven to despair and self-destruction. She would have been glad to die, but she lived.

Françoise became untiringly devoted to her young mistress, from the moment when she rushed in, on hearing the startling cry, and found her lifeless in her husband's arms. She was really kind-hearted, with all her French love of the dramatic; and her sympathy for Grace, whom she regarded as an innocent victim of an unhappy love affair, was genuine, and her devotion won Grace's heart.

Martin congratulated himself upon having found out the truth; anything was better than being deceived and hoodwinked by a woman's wiles. He thought it all over coolly while Grace was ill, sometimes quickened in his considerings by her frenzied references to Brooke, and he decided that, on the whole, it would be the most sensible and philosophical course to regard his rival as safely disposed of, and to make what capital he could, in the way of comfort and happiness and gratified pride, out of his married life. It was the most consistent with the *rôle* he had adopted as a polished, gracious, im-

perturbable man of the world. The wound to his jealous self-love was severe, and if Grace had been less beautiful and winning, a wife whose possession was less a matter of pride, he might have cast her off, or made her suffer as he felt that she deserved. As it was, it seemed worth while to bring his philosophy to bear, and try his power to supplant Brooke in Grace's affections.

So Martin adopted a kindly attentive manner ignoring the petulance and almost repulsion she manifested towards him during her illness; and as she gained strength, and began to appreciate that if she lost his love she should have nothing, they settled into very friendly relations.

As Grace saw no proof to the contrary, she persuaded herself that Martin had not learned her secret. Françoise asseverated solemnly, that never once in her delirium had she said a word that the whole world might not hear; and she thought that the horror she had shown about Brooke might well be regarded as only natural, as she had been the cause of his terrible fate. So as soon as she became convalescent, she began to try to seem happy, and to cover her real feelings.

One day she asked Françoise for the hand-glass. It was a very white, thin little face that presented itself, and the blue eyes, so unnaturally large, were languid enough, and the delicate lips were parched; but no one could help thinking it a very sweet, pitiful sight, and she was, on the whole, relieved. She made Françoise get some laces and pretty blue things to enhance her fragile loveliness, and she saw that Martin was not insensible to the effect when he came home. She had plenty of time, in the long, lonely hours of Martin's absence, to think and lament and grieve, though it was not from choice; she would have been only too glad of any diversion, but what was there?—absolutely nothing, except Françoise's gossip; and sometimes that became wearisome, and worse than solitude, because it required some effort to follow her rapid French. When she was able to read, she could forget her own woes and mistakes in those of the heroines of French novels.

It was in June, several weeks after Grace's attack of fever, and she had quite recovered her strength, when Martin, with a good deal of gentleness and with sincere regrets for her, as well as for himself, imparted the knowledge that had come to him gradually, but which fell upon her like a sudden, crushing weight. The fortune, to the possession of which they had both looked forward so eagerly and so long, and that Martin had worked for so earnestly, was lost to them forever.

The statements Martin made to Grace were briefly these: Of

the two administrators of Mr. Gellert's estate, one was dead, as Grace already knew. The other had left Paris secretly, having made away, first with his own fortune, then with that which he had in trust; and there was no retrieval.

If any efforts could have availed, Martin's must have done so. Every energy was taxed to the utmost in tracing the operations and discovering the whereabouts of the dishonest administrator. His indefatigable zeal and shrewdness and business capacity had one good result; they gained him the position of attorney in a prominent banking-house in Paris. He still meant to be a rich man, but now it must be by his wits and hard work, instead of finding a princely fortune, ready to his hand as a reward for his faithfulness to the memory of his pretty schoolmate and to one idea.

"By-and-by, *chérie*," he said to Grace, when he had finished his disclosures, and had let her a little into the secret of his plans and hopes, "I shall settle your twenty thousand upon you. I would do it now, only that I may be able to use it in some safe speculation, and double or treble it. It has served us excellently well so far. I couldn't have prosecuted my labors in the other matter at all without it, to say nothing of our bread and butter in the meantime. I suppose we might safely take a better apartment than this, now that none of our income is needed to set trains on foot, and pay lawyers' fees, and so forth;—say a story or two lower down, and on a more stylish street. What do you think, *petite*?"

"I don't care, I'm sure. I think we may as well stay here." answered Grace amid her tears. She had given herself up to crying hopelessly, in her unspeakable disappointment.

"You will feel differently in a day or two, pet," Martin answered lightly, turning to his desk. "You will be very glad to look out on something besides dingy houses; and we shall be rich and fine yet, as you will see."

But Grace was not cheered by promises of a fortune that was to be made by degrees. Luxury and success in society—to dress perfectly and be admired and sought after, would have made life attractive again; and she had been waiting for the fulfilment of her dreams, since her illness, with the feverish impatience of one whose happiness lies in forgetting, and who cannot forget without the helps for which he waits.

The future was as much a blank as the present to her eyes. She was awake, and could dream no more, and her bright hopes were heaps of gray ashes.

CHAPTER XLVI.

IN EXILE.

WHEN to the distress caused by Grace's elopement was added the horror of poor Brooke's suicide, Mr. William Craighead sent Zandy an earnest summons. He regretted taking her from Oxley, where her life was full of sunshine and pleasant occupation, and bringing her to his lonely home, but he felt a desperate need of her presence.

It was indeed a sorry exchange to Zandy, but her uncle's affection was a sufficient reward for her self-sacrifice, if she had desired any. He called her their "angel in the house," their "sunbeam," their "daughter," and declared they would never give her up again. It seemed to him that Helen's mantle had fallen upon Zandy, and that ever since Helen's death it had been growing more and more apparent, and he felt that she belonged to them. Nothing had prevented his claiming her, except the knowledge of her tenacious love for her Oxley home.

March with its winds and snow-flurries and its few placid days, April and May with their ready showers, their skies of alternating gloom and glory, and their winter cold and summer heat, passed, and perfect June came and was spreading her wondrous enchantments over earth and sky, and Zandy realized, she thought, what it must be for a lark or thrush, or any free-born bird, to be shut up in a gilded cage, instead of having its liberty and its home among the green leaves and blossoms and perfumes of the wild-wood. She was reasonably patient at the loss of the first sweet summer flush in the country; but sometimes it did seem as if nothing but a solitary row on her beloved lake, or a solitary ramble in her beloved woods, could satisfy her longings and soothe her restlessness.

One day, Zandy sat at the open window in her own room, conscious of the soft air and the sweet fragrance of the westeria, whose purple clusters waved from their aspiring stems beside the window; her eyes rested now on the golden sunshine that flooded the brown-stone fronts opposite as kindly as if they had been grassy hills instead, and now on the radiant blue above the roofs, and occasionally followed absently the steps of a passer-by. She was vaguely conscious, too, of the ceaseless

rumbling of omnibuses and carts and carriages, of the shrill or sluggish cries of venders of fruits and wares, and of the notes of a cracked hand-organ—of all the sounds that strike so discordantly into June's harmonies; and all the time her thoughts were busy with things far removed from what her ears heard and her eyes saw; places and scenes came like vivid pictures, words and tones like startling echoes, thrilling her with pain or a brief joy.

The fading of the sunlight from the houses opposite reminded her, at length, that the afternoon was passing, and that she had an errand to do for her aunt, and she hastened to dress for her walk.

Late as it was, she could not resist the temptation to lengthen the walk a little for the sake of going through a park. The shadows, the breezes moving among the leaves, the soft cool grass, always so radiant when the slant sunbeams touch it, made her sigh, and look impatiently on to the end of her exile. She felt a disdainful pity for the twittering sparrows that hopped about in the paths and on the grass, and tamely fluttered their wings in a town park, when the free air and wide fields were just beyond.

When she had accomplished her errand and started homeward she found, to her dismay, that the sky had become overcast with clouds that looked as if they might break at any moment.

She hurried across towards Madison Avenue, thinking that if the rain came she could take an omnibus and ride to her uncle's door, and so escape a drenching. But before she was half way to the Avenue, and while the sun was shining out encouragingly from between two clouds, great round drops came suddenly down upon the pavement, and she was thinking ruefully of the probable fate of her new gray suit while she hurried on, when she heard her name spoken, and looking back, saw Stephen Hollister coming down the steps of a house she had just passed, without a thought of its being Mrs. Hollister's. Two ladies stood at the door, one with her hat on, and Zandy knew instinctively who they were.

"I am deputed to take you in out of the rain, without delay, Miss Craighead," Stephen said, holding his umbrella over her.

"I can't go in—you see I cannot," said Zandy, looking down at her wet dress, and up at the ladies, who bowed and waited in smiling expectation.

"I don't see that you cannot; on the contrary, I see every reason why you can and must. My mother would be beyond measure shocked if you were to keep on through the floods that are sure to fall from those black clouds presently."

"If it is going to rain much—if you would lend me your umbrella"—Zandy began her objection hesitatingly, and ended it with a bright smile, for Stephen shook his head with a look that she remembered to have seen often before when each was bent on carrying a point.

"I cannot spare my umbrella," said Stephen, with an answering smile; "I should spoil my hat in going back without it, and besides, I think it far better that you should let my sister take you home in her carriage, which will be here very soon."

Zandy said no more, though she felt a strange shrinking from accepting the offered shelter. This was her first meeting with Mrs. Hollister and Bessie, notwithstanding their having known of each other so long and so pleasantly through others. She had always thought of Mrs. Hollister as being like Mrs. Lowe, and had felt an interest in Bessie because Helen admired her so much. She was not disappointed now. Their warm greeting and Bessie's frank, cordial ways put her quite at ease, and when the rain was over and the carriage came, and she bade Mrs. Hollister good-by, she did not feel that they were strangers.

Mr. Craighead was at home and anxiously watching for Zandy, when the carriage drove up and she and Stephen got out. He met them at the door, saying,

"Well, Alexandra, I am glad to find that you are not drowned. We are very much indebted to you, Mr. Hollister, for rescuing her from such a fate."

"It is not the first time, either," said Zandy without premeditation, and with a quick look at Stephen, and a half smile that was instantly lost in a blush, when she saw the deprecating shake of his head.

"Not the first time?" repeated Mr. Craighead, with a curious look from one to the other.

"I nearly drowned Mr. Hollister and myself, in Saranac Lake, long ago, in a fit of bad temper, and Mr. Hollister was so good as to save me as well as himself." Zandy said this rather defiantly, feeling vexed with herself for having made the reference.

"Indeed!" her uncle exclaimed, laughing; "we had all forgotten that you ever had a temper. Mr. Hollister, walk in, pray—what is your carriage waiting for?—Ah! Mrs. Schuyler! lend me your umbrella, Hollister, and let me go down and"—evidently a very startling thought struck him at that instant, for he stopped short, gazing at Stephen in blank dismay.

"Alexandra!" he exclaimed, "is it possible that I didn't tell you that I had invited Mr. Hollister to dine with us to-day?"

Upon my word, if you say I did not I shall think I have taken leave of my senses."

"I am sorry, uncle, but it is true," Zandy replied, smiling.

"I have been anxiously waiting for some intimation from Miss Craighead that I was expected, and would be welcome," said Stephen, laughing heartily as Mr. Craighead, with a melodramatic air, put his hands to his head; "but now the mysterious silence is explained, and I feel relieved."

"I am sure Mr. Hollister would consider your forgetfulness excusable, uncle, if he knew that you found Aunt Louisa ill when you came home last night," said Zandy.

"And that was not all," said Mr. Craighead: "we had absorbing news from across the water, and this morning, at breakfast, Alexandra and I could think and talk of nothing else. Am I absolved?"

"Entirely; I am as fully satisfied as if you had sent a special messenger to Mrs. Craighead and Miss Craighead yesterday, the moment you had invited me. But as it lacks more than half an hour of dinner-time, if you will excuse me, I will drive home with my sister and return. I leave town in the morning, and shall have no other opportunity to bid my small nephew good-by."

Mr. Craighead went to the carriage with Stephen to have a laugh with Mrs. Schuyler at his own expense, and Zandy hastened to her aunt, and then to prepare for dinner.

In a lovely white dress, with a blue knot at her throat, her hair arranged in its usual graceful simplicity, and a grave look in her eyes, Zandy entered the parlor soon after Stephen arrived. The grave look vanished when she met her uncle's smile, and she welcomed Stephen, announcing herself as hostess, her aunt being quite unable to appear.

It was nothing new for Zandy to preside at her uncle's table, and when there was more than one guest; but it was altogether new for her to feel ill at ease, and she was indignant at the trepidation with which she took her place now. She charged it to her uncle's seeming disturbed, as he always did when her aunt kept her room, and she was the more annoyed, there being the greater need that she should be perfectly self-possessed.

It was a great help to her to feel, as she did, that Mr. Hollister was unconscious of any constraint; and there was none, after the first few minutes; for—thanks to Stephen—the conversation fell readily upon pleasant matters of mutual, yet impersonal interest, and Mr. Craighead soon forgot his causes of solicitude, and Zandy forgot herself. Besides her appreciative interest in the various subjects that were discussed, it was a de-

light to see her uncle so thoroughly diverted, and his face so free from every trace of the troubled expression it had worn much of late.

When they went back to the drawing-room, Mr. Craighead drew Stephen's attention to some paintings by Ommeganck which he had brought from Antwerp; and turning suddenly to Zandy, he said, "I noticed an arrival by the *Ville de Paris* this morning, Alexandra, that will interest you; who do you think it was?"

"I know, Uncle William—I saw it myself; you mean Mrs. Lowe."

"Yes; but how calmly you take it! why, I supposed you would be beside yourself with joy, and here you have known it all this time, and haven't once thought to mention it!"

"I have had all day to think of it, uncle"—

"And your gladness has had time to cool a little, eh? I was sorry not to see Arthur's name, as well as his mother's. Isn't he coming back to set up his studio in New York?"

"I don't know, indeed, uncle."

"I hope he is not going to live abroad permanently. I don't like so many of our artists doing that, and I have a personal objection to Lowe's staying away, for he is a great favorite of mine, and I want him here, so that I can see him occasionally."

"The advantages are so much greater for artists in Italy—that must influence them," Zandy remarked.

"Yes, but I don't believe in a man's taking his genius, be it much or little, away from home. While he is having the benefit of those greater advantages, he is steadily growing out of harmony with his countrymen, and he will be sure to discover it if he comes home, in the course of years, with something he has accomplished, expecting to find that his career has been proudly watched from afar. Ten chances to one he goes back filled with bitterness at his country's want of appreciation. In my opinion, every man who has any gifts has something to do in educating us up to the desired standard in art, literature, science—in whatever line his talents may lie; and it stands to reason that he can do it better on the spot, where he can make his personal influence a power in the cause. But this tirade has nothing to do with Arthur Lowe, for I am certain he has no intention of defrauding us. Did you meet him, Mr. Hollister?"

"Oh, yes—several times; in Paris and Switzerland."

"Perhaps he is going to travel in Switzerland again this summer, and may come home later in the season. Did Mrs. Lowe

say nothing of their plans, Alexandra?—whether she was going to return to Rome, or Arthur was to join her here?"

"I have not heard from her"—Zandy replied, with a slight tremulousness of voice—"we have not written to each other since I came home.—I didn't know she was coming now, until I saw her arrival."

Mr. Craighead raised his eyebrows in surprise, but seeing that Zandy looked disturbed, he said no more, and turned again to the pictures, which Stephen was still examining.

"What do you think of them?" he asked.

"They are very fine," said Stephen, a little absently, but he added, his face relaxing into a smile, "I don't know how to descant upon the 'breadth of shade' and 'depth of tone' and 'warmth of coloring,' and all the 'sentiments' that people usually find in pictures; but I can see that the sheep are wonderfully woolly and like live sheep, and that the landscapes are charming. I remember enjoying Ommeganck exceedingly in Antwerp and Brussels, myself, and without any of the conflicts between duty and inclination that torment one sometimes in the ancient galleries. But the fashion with us novices in art is, to sniff at whatever has a bright, modern look, though it may give us ever so keen a thrill of involuntary pleasure."

"And if we have a few thousands to invest in pictures to bring home, we generally choose copies of some old masters, of at least doubtful beauty, instead of modern originals, as to whose charm and merit there could be but one opinion. I take great credit to myself for my good sense in matters of this kind, though my knowledge is limited."

Soon after, Stephen rose to take his leave.

"I have an imperative engagement this evening," he said, when Mr. Craighead begged him not to go so early, "and I have been in the close court-room all day, which is not conducive to making one an agreeable companion."

"I see you are not looking well," said Mr. Craighead, as Stephen, in turning towards the gaslight, revealed a very pale face.

"It is only a headache, which a walk in the open air may relieve," Stephen answered. He offered his hand to Zandy, saying, "I am afraid I shall not see you again before you return to Oxley, Miss Craighead—I leave town in the morning, and you will be gone when I come back."

Zandy met his eyes steadily and quietly, thinking, while he spoke, that if he had cared to see her, there had been plenty of time during the past four months; but her eyes softened with concern, when she saw that even his lips were white, and that his brow was contracted as if with pain.

"I am sorry your head is aching so badly," she said gently.

Stephen's eyes met hers, for an instant, with an expression that was startling in its earnestness, and then a strange light gleamed from their depths briefly, seeming to brighten his pale face, and he held her hand with an almost crushing clasp, of which she thought him unconscious—as he was. But it all passed in the space of a momentary hesitation, and he replied to her sympathetic words and looks with a poor attempt at a careless tone and smile:

"Thank you, it is a faithless head. I will take it away. Good-by.—Will you give my regards to Mrs. Craighead?"

"Why don't you come to Oxley, to rusticate, Hollister?" demanded Mr. Craighead, following him into the hall. "Haven't you any old friends there that you care to look up?—to say nothing of the city friends whom you would find, with all their relations, ready to give you a welcome?"

"Beginners at law haven't much chance to rusticate, Mr. Craighead," Stephen answered; "but as I remember Oxley, there could not well be a pleasanter place for the purpose."

"You had better act upon that remembrance, if you have a few days to spare this summer," Mr. Craighead said, as he opened the door for Stephen.

Stephen thanked him and departed, and Mr. Craighead returned to the drawing-room, where Zandy stood by the table, softly lifting and dropping the cover of a book; with her eyes cast down, and a quiet face.

"I never liked Hollister as well as I have lately," Mr. Craighead said, "to-day especially. I have always respected him thoroughly, and felt there was a great deal of reserved force in him; he seemed capable of accomplishing anything he undertook, and there is not a more promising young lawyer in the country; but there is something new about him—what is it?—he seems to have developed all the qualities that I thought he lacked—that crust of reserve and cynicism that used to repel me is broken; how frank and genial he appeared to-day.—Didn't you think so?"

Zandy assented, taking up the book she had been playing with, and looking at the pictures. Her uncle continued, walking up and down the room:

"I don't believe he is very socially inclined yet; this isn't the first time I have asked him to dinner since you have been here, and he always pleaded some business engagement. If he found the claims of society conflicting with those of his profession, he would ignore society, for he is bent on success. I don't believe in going through life with one idea—like hermits, but my observation goes to prove that it isn't the men who begin

with a divided allegiance who achieve the greatest success.—Falling in love and marrying is a help and incentive; it gives a more generous, and at the same time a more definite motive to a young man's efforts. Working for abstract success is a cold, selfish business, and that is where I thought Hollister might go wrong.—I am going up to have a chat with Aunt Louisa, now, Zandy, and when I come down I want to talk over things with you. I haven't been able to keep poor Grace out of my mind, to-day. I wish Reynolds could be induced to live in New York, where we could look after her a little."

"I do wish so, too, uncle," Zandy responded earnestly; but as she stood at the window, after her uncle had left her, looking up into the bit of starry sky that she could see above the roofs, Grace was not uppermost in her thoughts.

She longed to see Mrs. Lowe with an intensity that made her wonder, knowing as she did how sad the meeting must be; but Mrs. Lowe might not care to see her, and the possibility made the tears come. When she dwelt on the suffering she had caused Arthur, and the terrible woe Grace had wrought, it seemed only reasonable that Mrs. Lowe should wish to forget them and all connected with them; and yet she could not help hoping to be sought out and taken to her heart, as in the happy days before such waves of trouble had broken between them.

A day or two later, Zandy received a note from her friend, appointing a time for a visit. The meeting was a sad one, but it was an inexpressible relief to Zandy to be assured of her friend's unchanged affection, and to hear, what Mrs. Lowe freely told her, how bravely Arthur was bearing his disappointment. He had decided to stay abroad another year, and his mother would have stayed with him, if it had not been for the sad state of her dear friend, Mrs. Donovan. She had come home in the hope of giving some help and comfort to that stricken heart. The poor mother, always fragile, had not lifted her head since that most terrible sequel to her son's good fortune and joyful home-coming. She knew nothing of what awaited him, until all was over, for her husband had not courage to tell her; she thought his presence was to be a great glad surprise to Grace. So the awful shock of Brooke's death, and the knowledge of the cause, came together, not many hours after she had lovingly bade him God-speed, as he was setting forth, full of joyful impatience, to seek his "true-love."

Brooke's father had joined him as he left the house, and painfully dealt the blow that staggered reason, that blinded conscience and courage, and made him claim the right to end an existence that had become intolerable misery.

The poor mother's little strength was slowly wasting, and the stricken father went in and out of the desolated house, counting the crowning stroke added to the bitter chastenings of a disappointed, fruitless life.

To this home Mrs. Lowe had come, a ministering angel, to try to teach a diviner, because more real and practical faith to her sorrowing friends, and to shed the light of her cheerful spirit and tender sympathy over the darkness and silence, that must not, should not be hopeless—so she said to Zandy, as they wept together over the sad story; “I *must* see the shadows lift; there never was a grief so heavy that it could not be lightened.”

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE HIGH-TIDE OF THE YEAR.

It was the noontide of a midsummer day, and Oxley and the lake and woods and ripening fields basked in the warm sunshine that flooded the world.

Mrs. Craighead, from the piazza where she sat with her work-basket beside her, watched Zandy and Dick and Corrie and Johnny, as they came sauntering slowly across the lawn. Dick's straw hat had the broadest brim he could find in Oxley; his coat hung from the end of a stick resting on his shoulder. Zandy wore a cambric dress of convenient length for tramping, and a hat of gypsy fashion, not very much smaller than Dick's. The children carried a large white umbrella between them, and were very merry, judging from the shouts of laughter that reached their grandmother's ears.

“How lovely and cool you look, grandma!” cried Zandy, when they stood at the steps.

“What foolish children to stay out so long!” said Mrs. Craighead. “I thought you were going to take a short row, and come in before the heat of the day.”

“So *I* supposed, grandma,” sighed Dick, pushing his hat back, “but that ‘insatiable’ Zandy, as Uncle Johnston justly calls her, would go here, and would go there; and we began to think she never would get enough of scrambling and the blazing sun—didn't we, children?”

“No! we all liked it,” cried Corrie, “and we were only sorry we had to come home so soon.”

“Please to speak for yourself, Cornelia. I have felt a gnawing desire to come home—to *be* at home, rather, for the last hour and a half.”

“We were all hungry, but we wished we had our dinner with us, it was so lovely in the woods.”

“If we had only thought to send Dick back after a lunch for us!” said Zandy.

“If you only had! I wonder I didn't think to propose it! Johnny, take my coat in for me; I'd do as much for you if you were as exhausted as I am.”

“Hear that!” cried Johnny, “when he loafed, and Zandy and I rowed all the way from The Brothers!”

"I sung for you like a nightingale all the time, and that was just as hard work. You can see Zandy isn't as tired as I am, by the way she skips up the steps."

Zandy seated herself near her grandmother, and laughed with her at Dick's lazy airs.

"Give me the coat, Dick, I'll carry it," said Corrie, who would have let her handsome brother make a "fag" of her, if he had been disposed.

"There's a lesson in politeness for you, Johnny," said Dick, reprovingly. "Learn of your little sister to be kind to the aged and infirm. Relieved of that burden, I think I can mount the steps."

"You must not be too long about it, my dear," said Mrs. Craighead. "You have none too much time to get ready for dinner."

"That word puts new life in me," cried Dick, springing to the piazza with a bound; he caught Zandy's hand as he passed, and they disappeared within the door.

Hearing voices in the library, they stopped to look in, and found Royal stretched on the sofa.

"You are sorry you went," said Royal. "You are nearly burned up and tired out, I know."

"Indeed, we are not. We had a grand time, didn't we Dick?" said Zandy.

"Of course we did. You lost a great deal, old fellow. Have you been lying there all the time?"

"No: I went to pay Aunt Edith a morning call, and finding her just starting out to make some parish visits, I walked with her to the first place, carrying her basket of good things for her. I then came home and had a pleasant interchange of opinions on various important subjects with grandpa, also with grandma. After that I read aloud to mother. I have only been lying here a few minutes, resting."

"I shall rest all the afternoon in like manner," said Dick.

"You are going to play duets with me after dinner," said Zandy, laying her hand on Dick's shoulder. "Parts of symphonies have been running in my head all the morning, like orchestral accompaniments to delicious summer songs, and I want to try the arrangements I have for the piano. It was one of my great reasons for being in a hurry to have you come home, that we might play duets whenever I felt like it, and we haven't touched them yet."

"The idea of my undertaking symphonies, when I have hardly looked at a piano since I went to college!" said Dick. "A fellow can't keep up his polite accomplishments when he is digging like a galley-slave among Greek and Latin roots."

"Poor boy! nobody could expect it, but your part of the duets is so easy," said Zandy, while Royal gave a significant little laugh.

"What do you mean by that piece of impertinence?" demanded Dick, as he leaned lazily against the door, fanning himself with his hat. "Anybody that walks all the time with his head in the clouds can't see what's going on at his feet."

"No—I suppose it is because I am so sublimated, that I never have been able to see you working like a galley-slave."

"Of course it is. Everybody but you, and perhaps grandpa, sees that I have worn the flesh off my bones studying this last year. I ought to have been sent to Europe to recruit."

"You would rather be here than anywhere else in the world—you know you would, Dick, dear," said Zandy.

"Well, if you say so—I never contradict you, Zandy," Dick responded, meekly.

For two or three hours after dinner, Zandy and Dick were absorbed in their duets and each other. When they went into the library, where Royal and the children were reading, Royal said, "What are you going to do now, Zandy?"

"She is going to read to me while I lie off," said Dick, keeping his hold of Zandy's hand, and drawing her to the book-case.

"No, she isn't," cried Corrie; "you know, Zandy dear, what we were going to do."

"Some day, but not now, pet; it is too late."

"We haven't had a *tête-à-tête* since I came home, Zandy," said Royal, "and there is no end of things I want to talk to you about. You neglect me shamefully."

"We will have one now, Roy. Dick ought to call on Carrie, and the children are going to drive with grandpa and grandma soon, so there couldn't be a more auspicious time. I will get my work; I have two little frocks to finish to take to my children in the morning, so I ought not to read, Dick."

"What children?—I didn't know you had any but Johnny and Corrie."

"Yes, I have, ten of them."

"Don't you know Zandy has a school of children that can't pay, and that have to help their mothers?" asked Corrie.

"Oh, that's where you were yesterday. You have really become a Lady Bountiful and a charity school-ma'am!"

"Do you clothe all your scholars?" asked Dick.

"No, indeed. The frocks are for two little girls whose mother has been ill all summer; when she is well she dresses them very neatly."

"What did your school do without you while you were away?" Royal asked.

"Carrie and Aunt Edith looked after them," Zandy replied.

"But they nearly broke their hearts for Zandy," Corrie declared. "They like Aunt Edith and Carrie, of course; but they *adore* Zandy. You should hear them go on about her."

"I shall visit your school," said Royal. "Dick, suppose we go together, and see if we approve her course of study. You don't 'keep' every day, do you?"

"No, only two hours, three times a week. Their mothers can't spare them oftener than that, even if I had the time."

"I suppose you have classes in German and music and French," said Dick.

"The idea, Dick," cried Corrie—"don't you think Zandy has more sense than that? She teaches Johnny and me and Carrie those things, but the children learn simple books, and to sew."

"The three R's, I suppose, and jog'aphy," suggested Dick. "I should like to know what would become of Oxley without Zandy? Corrie and Johnny would grow up in ignorance, Carrie wouldn't know half as much as she does, the poor children would go ragged"—

"And Johnny and I miss her all the time—nothing goes half as right when she is away," said Corrie; "she shan't ever go again."

"And I miss Oxley a hundred times more than Oxley misses me," cried Zandy, with playful emphasis. "I must get my sewing this minute," she added, starting up from Dick's knee, where she had been sitting during the talk.

"Come out under the Charter Oak, Zandy," Royal said; "and remember, children, and you, Dick, that we are not to be interrupted."

The Charter Oak, as Johnny and Corrie had long ago named the grand old tree which was one of the features of the lawn, stood at a pleasant distance from the house, and its broad cool shadow was never invaded by the sun till he was near the tops of the western hills. So Zandy and Royal had a long and comfortable time for their *tête-a-tête*. Zandy, seated on a low rustic bench, worked at the pretty calico dresses for her scholars; Royal lay on the velvety grass at her feet, and their quiet voices, in ceaseless flow, did not disturb the birds, dreaming among the green leaves just above their heads.

Zandy was the only one, since Helen died, to whom Royal ever opened his heart. She knew his hopes and plans, and faults and trials; and peculiarities, that must have grown into habits of thought or feeling, if he had lived within himself as much as he would have done but for her, were checked, con-

sciously or unconsciously, by contact with her generous nature.

Now, as they sat under the oak, it was chiefly of Royal's father and mother that they talked. When he was at home for the spring vacation, he had felt hopeless of any permanent improvement in his mother's health and spirits. As he told Zandy at the time, if she had not been there he could not have endured it—it would have been too much like a funeral. Ever since that visit he had been in a state of rebellion over the spoiling of his home, and he shocked Zandy once or twice by the bitter doubts he expressed as to the reality of Christian faith: what was it worth if it failed in times of need? He tried to atone for all disloyal feelings and utterances by gentle attentions when he was with his mother, and punctual letters when he was absent from her; but it would have been strange, indeed, if Mrs. Craighead, even in her self-absorbed melancholy, had not felt the change from his old loving devotion, and pride in her and his home, to that studied thoughtfulness.

In the few days Royal had been in Oxley, there had seemed to him to be an improvement, and he now appealed to Zandy to have his hopes confirmed: Did his mother's keeping her room less, and seeming more interested in what was going on, and her wearing lighter mourning, mean more than the temporary brightening of her spirits that had encouraged them before?

Zandy was sure they did, and she told him of other signs of a change for the better, and made him as sanguine as she was herself.

"If we could but see her again as she used to be!" he said. "Father will come a week from to-day;—how I wish he could see a change that would make him as happy as the hope makes me."

"He will, Royal, dear. I feel sure of it," Zandy said.

"If mother is really herself again, there will be no need of your being with her next winter, and that will be a great thing, for you love Oxley so, and there is so much for you to do here."

"I am going back with her when she goes, in September," said Zandy, brightly. "It is a secret yet—at least Dick, and the children don't know it, but I have made up my mind, and grandpapa and grandmamma have consented, and said they thought it was best."

Royal exclaimed in surprise, and Zandy went on:

"I made up my mind when we first came home. I wasn't happy until I had, for I felt all the time that I was avoiding a plain duty, and clinging to what was for my own happiness. Whenever I thought of Uncle William and that quiet, lonely house, or looked at Aunt Louisa, or thought of Helen, I was

miserable, for I knew, by making a little—no, a *great* sacrifice, I could be of real use. So, I suppose to get rid of being miserable”—Zandy said this with a smile that was half sad, as she folded one of the little dresses—“I told myself that I would go, and asked grandpapa and grandmamma if I might, and then I told Aunt Louisa that I was going.”

“But won't it make any difference—mother's being so much better?—if she keeps on improving, will she need you as much as you are needed here?” asked Royal, pleading really for Zandy's happiness, under a light cover of thought for others.

“I am not really needed here, Roy; Aunt Edith and Carrie can do perfectly well what little I have undertaken, and I know Aunt Louisa would be sadly disappointed—she couldn't be well enough not to need me next winter.”

Royal was leaning his arm on the bench beside Zandy, and, resting his head on his hand, he looked up at her meditatively. Presently he said:

“One of the mysteries is, that it comes natural for some people to be selfish, and as natural for others to be as unselfish.”

“I suppose you would count me among the *unselfish* ones,” said Zandy, playfully; “but you are very much mistaken.—Roy, I believe it is easier to deal with besetting sins—great staring faults, than with little ones that only show their faces occasionally.”

“Do you mean to say that you think selfishness was ever one of *your* besetting sins?”

“Not only was, but *is*. There never was a self that was fonder of being pleased and comfortable than mine.”

“It is odd that we never suspected it of being so greedy; how you must snub it and put it down.”

“If I didn't, it would take and keep the best of everything.”

“Then it would get its deserts.”

“I know it too well to be set up by anything you can say in its praise, Royal, dear,” Zandy said; and having finished and folded her second frock, she looked towards Edith's cottage, which stood just beyond the head of the lake, its garden being separated from the lawn by a hedge with a rustic gate leading through. “I am going to Aunt Edith's to tea, Roy,” she said.

“Oh, no; don't, Zandy!”

“Yes; I have hardly been there at all since you boys came home. Take my work-basket in, please, and tell grandmamma where I am.”

“You might take me with you.”

“No, dear, you can go some other time. I want this

visit all for my *self*—didn't I tell you it was greedy? I don't always snub it either, you see.”

Zandy walked across the lawn, that gleamed with the brightest emerald hue, stopping at the little gate to look back and kiss her hand to Royal, who lay stretched on the grass, leaning his head on his hand and watching her. She lingered in the garden, especially beside a bed of pansies in which she and Edith had an equal interest. It contained, it seemed, every possible variety of color and shade that was ever known in pansies, from the palest violet to glossy black, with yellow hearts and fringes; from the palest straw color to the deepest bronzed gold.

Honeysuckles and woodbine grew over the pretty Gothic porch that looked out on the garden—the same that had been planted by hands long since cold; and now, as always, beautiful and dear, though vague, pictures of faces and scenes floated before Zandy, conjured up by the potent magic of that delicate fragrance. She stood a moment to gaze at the lake and hills and fields; they seemed just awakening, with happy sighs and murmurs, from a long, bright dream of bliss, to bid farewell to the sun, that was soon to sink behind the purpling hills; then she went in.

The room on the left, as Zandy entered, was the study, where Edith was almost sure to be found, if she were not busy with visitors or household duties; and Zandy, seeing the door ajar, looked in. Mr. Boyd was there alone, writing.

“Ah, Zandy, is it you?” he asked, laying down his pen. “Come in; you are a great stranger since those boys came; we are disposed to be very jealous of them.”

“I am glad you miss me,” Zandy replied. “But I have come to tea now, so I needn't disturb you; you might not take up the right thread. Where is Aunt Edith? I hope she hasn't company.”

“I saw her ten minutes ago, on her way to the kitchen, and by the way! I *suspect* that we are going to have some of those puffy rolls that are such favorites with you and me.”

“I should think Aunt Edith would have sent for me! I shall go and see about it.”

Zandy went to the kitchen, glancing in at each room as she passed, the charm of their tasteful coloring and simple elegance being always new to her. In the dainty kitchen, which had its own appropriate charm, she found Edith with a white sack and apron over her pretty muslin dress, busy at a table where all the accessories of the “puffy rolls” were spread out.

“O, Zandy, darling!” she cried, as she found a pair of arms

clasping her, and saw Zandy's face close to hers—"I was that instant wishing for you, and wondering if Sydney would enjoy these things without you."

"A happy instinct moved me to come," Zandy said, seating herself at the end of the table, where the west wind came in at the window and played with her hair, and bits of golden sunshine floated down through the leaves and danced about her head, as if they thought it akin to themselves.

Edith paused, with a cup of cream in her hand, to look at Zandy. "Something specially happy is in your heart, pet," she said, adding the yellow cream to the mysteries already in the dish, "or you couldn't look so sunshiny."

"How could anybody help looking and feeling sunshiny today?" asked Zandy, watching the skilful grace of Edith's hands. "I wonder if this day has seemed to you, or any one else, just as it has to me. To be sure, I have had nothing to trouble me, but I have felt as if nothing ever could—as if sad thoughts and every care had flown away forever, and there was no reason why I shouldn't always be perfectly happy and contented. I have felt hopeful for everybody, even for Grace and poor Mrs. Donovan, and I think it is generally harder to be hopeful for others than for one's self, because one never can tell just how sad the case is, unless it is one's own."

"These midsummer days, so long, and so full of beauty, have that same sort of charm for me," said Edith. "If one could ever be a Pantheist, it would be in this 'high-tide of the year.'"

"I don't suppose any place is quite as sweet as Oxley, even at the 'high-tide,'" said Zandy, and she added, "I wish you would let me try my hand at those rolls some time; it seems easy to make them so delicious when I see you do it, but I suspect there is magic in your touch, and I should like to find out."

"You shall try it *once*," Edith said, as she put the delicate white rolls in the pans; "but I shan't let Sydney touch them if they are as good as mine! I don't mean to cook much, but the things I can make particularly well, that Sydney likes, I shall never let anybody else make. I will teach you all I know, though, when you set up for yourself, that is, all grandma hasn't taught you already—the dainty things that I think your prince would like to have you make with your own hands."

"I expect to keep house for grandmamma by-and-by," Zandy said. "She promised me I might, only the other day."

"Did she?—we shall see what we *shall* see. Now Nancy, be very careful. I wish these to be the very nicest I ever made, and you know how much depends on the baking. Have tea the moment they are done. Zandy, dear, come up to my room."

Edith's room looked out on the lake and garden, and towards her old home, and was as sweet a place as one need wish to see. While she took off her apron and sack, and gave a touch to her hair and dress, Zandy sat by the window in a reverie. When Edith came and stood beside her, looking out on the glowing lake, Zandy said quietly, "New York doesn't seem to me like a gloomy prison now. I think I can be happy there."

"Ah, darling! I knew it; I was sure the cross would prove lighter than you feared," said Edith, kissing the quiet face. Sydney came up while they were talking about it, and tea was announced soon, when the discussion of the rolls and "other feathery topics," proved very satisfactory.

After tea there was a walk in the garden, and then music.

"Can you play that lovely *Allegretto*, Zandy, that we used to like so much?" Edith asked, when Zandy had played several things that were in keeping with the warm purple twilight.—"We haven't heard it since you came home from Europe, and I have often longed for it when you were not here to play it."

"I don't know—I haven't tried it in a very long time—not since we were in Nice. I am afraid I should spoil it."

Zandy touched a few quiet notes, and after a little pause, the first full minor chord fell on the still air of the shadowy room, and stole out into the twilight, like the cry of a heart that sees its bright hopes departing; the passionate pleadings followed swiftly, now despairing, now eager; and then the brave, gentle resignation of the *Maggiore*; the struggle over again, and the final submission to the inevitable.

As the last notes of the *Coda* died away, Edith said, "It is lovelier than ever, Zandy, and you have had a listener, besides Sydney and me. Some one was passing just as you began the *Maggiore*, and he stood like a statue until you had finished."

"Who was it?—we might have asked him in, if it was any one we know," said Mr. Boyd.

"It was not; at least I didn't recognize him.—But here is somebody that we *do* know, Zandy—the Maxwells: the two girls and their brother."

"Oh dear! I don't want to see them," said Zandy, leaving the piano.

"Not wish to see Frank Maxwell!" exclaimed Mr. Boyd. "That is very ungrateful of you."

"They will stay all the evening, so I shall run home."

"You can't go across the lawn, for the grass is wet by this time."

"Then don't let them sit by the window, and I can go out without their seeing me. Good night."

Zandy retreated to the study, which opened out of the parlor, and waited until the visitors were seated, and then stole out the garden door and around to the street gate.

It was hardly more than a grassy lane—the quiet little street where Mr. Boyd's house stood, and led all the way beside Mr. Craighead's garden. Zandy walked leisurely, looking back at the darkened hills and the crimson sky, and listening to a church bell that rang out clear and sweet in the distance just then. The lake was hidden from her view by the high hedge that enclosed the garden on that side. The hedge, too, prevented her seeing any one who was coming from the direction of her grandfather's, until she reached the corner, and so she was greatly startled at finding herself face to face with Stephen Hollister, as she turned from the lane.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

HEART TO HEART.

STEPHEN was startled, as well as Zandy, by their sudden meeting; he raised his hat and offered his hand, but did not speak at once; indeed, Zandy was the first to find voice, though it was not altogether a steady one.

"So you have really come to Oxley," she said, smiling.

"Yes, I arrived a few hours ago. It is not so much changed as I supposed," Stephen answered.

"I never liked thriving villages," Zandy said; "I am glad Oxley is not in danger of being spoiled into a busy town, like the little girl's kitten that was spoiled into a great cat. Have you been to see your 'city friends and their country relations?'" she asked, as they walked on towards the house.

"No—not yet; I have been prowling about, taking observations—also playing the part of eavesdropper." An instant conviction flashed across Zandy, but she made no sign, and Stephen added, "I heard something that took me back to Nice."

"Did you?—an *Allegretto*?" Zandy said, in such a matter-of-course tone that Stephen glanced at her inquiringly.

"Yes, my favorite *Allegretto*; it would not have taken me quite so by surprise if I had heard it here,"—they were at Mr. Craighead's gate—"but it did strike me strangely to hear those familiar strains anywhere else."

"It was the parsonage," Zandy said. "The *Allegretto* is a favorite of my Aunt Edith's, too. You will come in now, will you not, Mr. Hollister?" she asked; "you will be sure to find the welcome Uncle William promised you, though he isn't here himself yet."

"Thank you; I was on my way to claim it when I found, through your music, that you were not at home."

They went in, and Zandy looked into the drawing-room and library, but found no one. "Come out to the other piazza, Mr. Hollister, there must be some one there;" the piazza, too, proved empty.

"Perhaps they are avenging themselves for your desertion," Stephen said; and added, taking in at a glance the picturesque

scenery, "This is very lovely. I had forgotten—if I had ever fully appreciated—the beauty of my native town."

"I think there could not be anything lovelier," Zandy responded.

"Oh, Miss Zandy, it's you, is it?" Rachel said, appearing at the door, and speaking to Zandy, while she looked curiously at Stephen.

"Where are grandfather and grandmother, Rachel?" Zandy asked.

"They're all gone to ride, Miss, except the young gentlemen; they waited for the cool of the evenin'. Master Royal and Master Dick's gone to Mr. Boyd's."

"Why, I just came from there."

"You came 'round the street way, Miss, and they went across the lawn. I saw them goin'."

"Very well."

Rachel departed, and Zandy and Stephen sat down to enjoy the moonlight.

"Do the hills and lake look smaller to you than they used, Mr. Hollister?" Zandy asked.

"No; I expected them to seem small in proportion to my increase in years and wisdom: but the hills are just as high, and the lake is as broad and as wonderfully green. Was any of the charm wanting when you came home from Europe, having seen Switzerland?"

"No, indeed!—I heard a lady say, coming over on the steamer, that Swiss scenery spoiled one for all other—made it seem tame and uninteresting; but I think that any one who doesn't enjoy all beauty more for having seen Switzerland, does not deserve the happiness."

"Ah, if happiness were granted only according to our deserts—some of us must despair. I am glad it is not."

"I am glad, too," Zandy said, a little puzzled at Stephen's grave response to her remark.

"Pray do not imagine that I am at my old trick of lecturing you, Miss Craighead," Stephen said, with a smile; and he added, after a pause, "I have my own happiness so much at heart just now, and the condition upon which it is staked is so presuming, that I cannot help taking an egotistical view of things, and the bare mention of deserts in connection with happiness was startling."

"I think you must remember your lectures, as you call them, more vividly than I do—I mean more disagreeably," Zandy replied, with a little hesitation. "I remember the occasions of them so well, that I only wonder you took the trouble to lecture me, or that you weren't more severe."

"It is not the mere fact of my scolding you," Stephen answered; "I suppose as your teacher it was my duty, or at least my privilege to find fault when you wouldn't say your lessons, and treated me disrespectfully"—

"And when I flew into passions."

"Yes; but what it is not pleasant to remember is, the air and *sense* of arrogant superiority with which I performed the duties, or assumed the privileges of my office. It would be trivial," Stephen added, in a graver tone, "for me to bear those instances in mind in which I overstepped bounds and made myself obnoxious, did they not come in as proofs of a characteristic self-sufficiency that, it is to be hoped, has seldom a parallel.—It came to pass as it is written," he went on, with some bitterness but more sadness in his tone—"Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall;—I fell from my pinnacle of self-complacency, and until very lately I have counted myself destroyed, as far as the fulfilment of the one great wish of my soul, for this life, was concerned. I have gained a little courage"—Stephen's voice trembled, and he stopped speaking.

Zandy did not look at him; she gazed steadfastly at the moonlighted lake, conscious of a great sympathy in his evident suffering—conscious of herself only in so far as her longing to help him, at least to let him feel her sympathy, and her dread of presuming upon his unwonted unreserve, made her so. If there were deep down in her heart the flutter of a new, sweet hope, it was unacknowledged. At length her generous frankness asserted itself, and she turned to Stephen.

"You remember telling me once that I had helped you—don't you? and saying that I must believe it in justice to myself?"

"At Kandersteg—yes. I remember it perfectly, and how meaningless I thought the words must sound to you, compared with the truth of which I was conscious."

"It seemed incredible," Zandy went on, her voice faltering a little, as she met the look in Stephen's eyes—she did not stop to wonder why it thrilled her so—"but I did believe it, and now you must believe *me*, when I tell you that no one has ever helped me more than you have, in many ways.—You made my studies a delight to me, but that is the least of all."

Stephen was silent a moment, then he said in a quiet voice:

"That I helped you in your studies is not beyond belief, for that was my province; but farther than that—it is not possible"—

"It is not fair for you to be incredulous," Zandy exclaimed,

her heart beating fast, though she spoke out bravely. "I only needed one assurance from you—and it did me a great deal of good.—That was *one* of the ways in which you helped me—letting me know that I had helped you."

"I am only incredulous as we are apt to be of unexpected blessings," Stephen said in the same quiet voice.

"I thought," Zandy went on, "that no one knew my faults better than you did, and that if, after all, my influence had been a helpful one, I need not despair. I had taken it for granted, I believe, that because I was so unlike Helen, I had nothing to do, or could do nothing, rather. You said it was no small thing to help a human soul, and I knew it, but I never had felt it as I did then, and have since."

Zandy felt that she had no other way of showing her sympathy but by giving confidence for confidence. Now she stopped, for as she raised her eyes to Stephen's face, its strange expression perplexed her; she even wondered if he had been listening to her. He spoke soon:

"I have a confession to make"—the firm lips quivered, the tones were tremulous, and Stephen paused. Zandy waited, not trying to imagine what he could have to confess to her; her heart and thoughts seemed to stand still while she waited. Stephen sat near her, and when he spoke again he laid his hand upon the arm of her chair, but he did not look at her.—"What you have said has been gentle and generous, like yourself, and I have tried to listen as a friend, but I have to confess that I have failed.—The hope that brought me to Oxley was a very faint one—I had scarcely courage to come. When everything is at stake, we shrink from putting our hopes to the test. Now my courage is stronger—it may be presumption, but I"—he turned to Zandy—"I have not been able to resist the conviction, that if you could think of me as kindly as your generous assurances prove, you might—love me."

The last words were no more than audible, and Stephen's chest heaved and his lips were white. Zandy sat still, conscious of the presence of a great joy, that to speak or move might dispel as a dream.

Stephen went on, his hand still resting on the arm of Zandy's chair, his lips still colorless, and his eyes turned from her: "It *is* presumption—I feel it to be so in every view but that of my great love for you."

Zandy had no longer the fear of dispelling a bright dream to keep her motionless and silent; it was the tumult of joy and love—the love that need be no more struggled against

and hidden deep in her heart, and wept over when it would assert itself—that made her afraid to trust her eyes and voice.

"I cannot tell"—Stephen said, "when this love first came into my heart. I think it was with my first experience of your brave truthfulness. I *do* know when I first fully acknowledged it to myself—and my own folly made it the bitterest hour of my life: it was when in your clear, truthful eyes, I saw the estimate in which you held my conduct in regard to"—Stephen's words came in labored utterance—"in regard to Miss Gellert; and I knew that you had no conception of the extent of my unworthiness—you thought I loved her, but had been dishonorable in keeping our relations secret—that was bad enough, but I knew that I had been false to her and to myself, making false professions, and ministering to a vanity that I knew was my only hold upon her. With this bitter sense of my unworthiness, came the consciousness of my love for you."

The last shadow had lifted from Zandy's happiness, and her lips had just parted to let her generous heart speak out of its loving fulness, when Stephen went on:

"I could not tell, if I would, what those months in Paris were to me—thinking of you always, and never able to think of you except with a galling sense of the scorn you must feel."—Zandy's whole soul cried out against that word.—"I am not sure, though, that I was utterly without hope until I met you in Switzerland. Then I said Never, never! to every hope I had unconsciously cherished, of some day laying my love at your feet, and begging you to let it atone. You were, and would forever be, my good angel, but hope was dead. And it never revived until the day we met in New York. I had never thought of my poverty as an obstacle; I knew that if you loved me my love would outweigh, in your eyes, honors and riches, and I had, besides, faith in my power to succeed. Such was my presumption, if we had been alone that day at your uncle's, when I tried to bid you good-by calmly, I *must* have told you what I have told you now. But I was thankful when I came to think of it reasonably, that the necessity of silence was laid upon me. I assured myself over and over that to hope was folly, but do what I would, I could not resist the entrance of a ray that, faint as it was, was like the dawn of a glorious day, compared with the darkness that had filled my soul.—Our little meetings in Switzerland—in the hall on the Riffel during the storm—the next morning, when you shut away from me, by the sweetness of your presence, all thought of the sunrise and the

mountains—the meeting by the Cairn, when we exchanged flowers, and I bound up your poor bruised thumb—my finding you at Kandersteg, so gentle and kind that I dared to tell you a little of what you had done for me—all the memories that made Switzerland sacred to me, seemed suddenly to have lost the sting of hopelessness, and to come clothed only in beauty. It seemed no longer a mocking fate that brought us together. I could not call it a mocking fate now, even if—Oh, Alexandra!” Stephen cried, turning to her with a sudden, passionate pleading in his eyes and voice—“What can you say to me to-night? I do not ask if you love me now;—if you can tell me that the knowledge of my love for you does not grieve you—that you think that you may *learn* to love me—I will be satisfied—at least I would try.”

Zandy turned her love-lit eyes to Stephen, a happy smile trembling on her lips, and he involuntarily opened the hand that rested beside her. Zandy laid hers quietly within it, and Stephen clasped it firmly, while his face grew bright with incredulous joy.

“I cannot say that I will learn,” Zandy said in low, clear tones, “for I love you now—dearly.”—She sat still with the one hand resting in Stephen’s, and the other lying quietly in her lap.

After a moment’s silence, in which they might almost have heard the beating of each other’s heart, Stephen pressed his trembling lips to the hand he held—“My darling—my darling!” and he drew her gently from her seat, and led her where the moonlight fell upon her, and holding both her hands, he gazed into her eyes. They met his unflinching, with the love-light in them.

“Oh, Alexandra! it is wonderful—this truth that you love me; it fills me with exultation—it glorifies my life. I am not sure that I had *any* hope—it seems to have come upon me so like a sudden flood of unlooked-for happiness.—I believe it is true,” he added, with one of his rare smiles, after a little pause, in which his face seemed to Zandy to be transfigured, and happy tears filled her eyes—“I do believe it, and I know how much it means, but let me hear you say that you are my Alexandra, that you will be my wife.”

The rose faded slowly from Zandy’s cheeks and a gentle gravity, an almost solemn tenderness, gathered in her eyes and about her mouth; but she answered looking trustfully up to Stephen’s eager, soul-full face:

“I will be your wife—I am your—Zandy.”

The bright color and a smile flashed over her face at the unexpected utterance of the familiar name. Stephen smiled, too,

and taking both her hands in one of his, he drew her within the other arm, and turned her face upward to meet his look, then tenderly and reverently kissed the smiling lips.

Sitting side by side they talked or were silent, as their happy hearts moved them, until they heard carriage-wheels approaching. Zandy would have caught her hands from Stephen’s clasp at the first sound, but he held them close.

“Am I to be an insignificant, undistinguished individual in the eyes of your friends, letting my eyes and lips tell no tales?” he asked.

“Yes, I think so—yes, *indeed!*—for to-night,” Zandy answered, making another vain effort to release her hands, though the voices were still in the garden.

“When, then, may I come to make known my unparalleled honors, and ask for a special and general recognition of them?”

“I don’t know”—

“But *I* must know. I can wait until after breakfast to-morrow morning, but not longer.”

Zandy looked up with a half-playful, half deprecating smile: “Grandpa and grandma might not care to see you so early.”

“Shall I ask them?”

“Oh, no!—you may come as soon as you like after ten o’clock.”

“I suppose you will hide yourself until I will have told my story, and my suit has been considered.”

“I shall not be at home,” Zandy replied, demurely, “I have an engagement from ten till twelve.”

“Have you, indeed? You are engaged indefinitely and wholly to me—the greater ought to exclude the less.”

“In this case the greater ought to *include* the less,” replied Zandy, “and besides, I am not”—

“Yes, you are, my darling—don’t say that you are not; if all the world said nay, I should hold you to your promise to be my wife, and you would never deny me, I know well.”

“Nobody will say ‘nay,’” said Zandy gently, and as footsteps and voices were heard in the hall, Stephen held her for an instant in his strong, tender arms, and then they sat apart and waited the coming of the others.

All were delighted to see Stephen. Mr. and Mrs. Craighead felt an interest in him from his having once lived in Oxley, and from having heard so much good of him. Mrs. William seemed to have forgotten her vexation at his silence and apparent indifference after he left Geneva, and to regard him as a valued friend, and Dick and Royal had only cordial remembrances of him. The conversation was so general and animated that Zandy’s silence was not noticed.

"I hope you are not going to hurry away from Oxley, Mr. Hollister," Mr. Craighead said, when Stephen rose to say good-night.

"No, you ought not, surely, when you have neglected your old home for so many years," added Mrs. Craighead.

"My leave of absence is much too short to satisfy me," returned Stephen, "and I shall stay until the last moment. It is not a lack of loyalty to my birth-place that has kept me away so long; I have always held it in affectionate remembrance, and now I find its charms so great that I shall not care to leave it at all."—Zandy trembled, but Stephen's voice and manner were so unsuggestive to all other ears, that she need have had no fear.

"It is a good place to spend vacation in—I admit it, Zandy," said Dick. "I have discovered new charms, that I think will enable me to regain my health here as well as in Europe. Why haven't I thought of that pretty Dora Maxwell before?"

"A wax doll!" said Royal, disdainfully.

"You couldn't tear yourself away, any more than I could myself," retorted Dick.

"I stayed to look after you," said Royal.

"Mr. Hollister, we shall hope to see you often while you are in Oxley," Mrs. Craighead said; "will you not dine with us to-morrow?"

"And we could show you some of the lions, after dinner," said Dick. "How would a pic-nic to the Dell do, Zandy? and I could invite the pretty Maxwell, and Royal the plain one, and I dare say Frank would be delighted to go."

"Mr. Hollister will come to dinner," said Mrs. Craighead, "and then you can arrange for the afternoon; it may be so warm that you would find it pleasanter to stay in the house."

Stephen accepted the invitation, and shook hands with all, for the sake of shaking hands with Zandy, and no one knew how warm and close the clasp was.

"Isn't he splendid!" ejaculated Corrie, when she had covertly watched Stephen until the gate was shut behind him, and had run back to the group in the drawing-room. "What lovely dark eyes and hair, and what a beautiful moustache. Oh! I do think he is the very handsomest gentleman I ever saw in my life—at least, that was so *old*."

"I wondered if you weren't going to except me," said Dick.

"He is better than handsome, Corrie," said her grandmother, "his face is too thin and grave to be strictly handsome, but it lights up when he speaks or smiles, and he seems very manly."

"And extremely gentlemanly and agreeable," added Mrs. William.

"I think he is like a prince. I hope my 'one lover' will be like him," sighed Corrie, who was beginning to revel in poetry.

Zandy felt as if any one might read her secret that looked in her face, yet dared not hurry away, for fear of disclosing it; so she lingered until all dispersed to their rooms, kissing them good-night with an almost remorseful tenderness.

Alone with her great joy, she gave thanks to Him who had granted it—the Giver of every perfect gift; and then she sat in the moonlight that streamed in at her window, and thought and dreamed, and lived over again, in the new light of her happiness, all the scenes, so dear and until now so sad. How eagerly she took the edelweiss and the other Alpine blossoms from their hiding-place, and how softly she pressed her lips to the little petals, bright still after all the months since they were taken from their mountain homes.

At last she was reminded to go to bed by the sudden thought that she did not wish her eyes to be dull and her cheeks pale on the happy to-morrow. But for a long time after her head rested on the pillow, she went on dreaming, with wide happy eyes looking out from her bed into the cloudless night, which was so in keeping with the deep joy that filled her heart, and sleep fell upon her eyelids as "softly as blown roses on the grass."

She woke just as the western hills were catching the first rosy gleams from the East, and the realization of what had come to her deepened with the glow of day.

With her secret still shut away in her heart, though its loveliness would look out through her eyes and tremble in smiles about her mouth, she met the family at breakfast. They never had been so dear, and never so loving, it seemed to Zandy.

After breakfast she and Corrie gathered fresh flowers for the rooms, and arranged them as usual, and she performed the few little household duties that her grandmother had allowed her to assume, and then, with Dick and Royal as self-appointed "body-guard" and to carry her books and bundles, she started for school. As they reached the corner of the village street, they saw Stephen coming towards them. He stopped only long enough to say "Good morning," and went on; but the glance he bestowed upon Zandy, in the brief space, threw her heart into a flutter of happy confusion.

"I wonder where he is going, so early," said Dick, as they walked on.

"Taking a constitutional, I suppose," said Royal.

"Carrie isn't visible this morning," said Dick, as they passed Carrie's little house. "She's probably busy, getting ready for her visitors; this is the day the Chandlers and Hammy come, isn't it?"

"I believe so. They are going to take Carrie to Niagara with them—did you know it, Zandy?"

"No! are they? how lovely!"

"Carrie doesn't know it—they didn't consult her, because they knew she would say she couldn't leave her mother; but they told me, the last time I saw them, that they should take her, willy nilly."

"We are going in," said Dick, when they reached the school-room, which was a room in Sally Blake's cottage, Zandy having hired it of her with a view to increasing her small means.

"No you are not, dear; I don't want any company to-day," said Zandy, and she smilingly dismissed them, refusing even to let them come to walk home with her.

Whether any of the little ones learned any new letters, or the older ones anything of geography and arithmetic, is matter for conjecture. Certain it is that after the first hour Zandy decided that she could not safely trust herself to say which was *m* and which was *n*, or how much two and two made. Her eyes, too, she found, in spite of all she could do, would watch the little gate, in momentary expectation of seeing a tall figure appear. So, before the first half hour of the second hour was ended, she dismissed her scholars, promising to see them the day but one after, and went home, calling herself very foolish.

How matchless the day seemed! if yesterday were perfect, to-day was more than perfect—not that Zandy thought of its beauty consciously; it was like a part of the radiant whole of her happiness, at least it was a fit setting for it.

She reached home without having met any one, and watched the library-window as she ascended the steps quietly, thinking that probably the mysterious conference was being held there. She was sure if it had been over, Stephen would have come to meet her; she was very glad he had not.

Her heart beat tumultuously as she entered the house, and then stood still, for the library-door opened at the instant, and her grandfather appeared. He gazed at her a moment, with something between a smile and a quiver about his lips, and then led her into the room. She greeted Stephen with a bright smile, but turned quickly, and with a sudden impulse put her arms about her grandmother's neck. Mrs. Craighead silently folded her closely, unable to command her voice to say one

word. After a struggle to keep back the tears, and to smile, she laid Zandy's hand in Stephen's, but Zandy clung to her, and would not let her go.

"Grandmamma, are you grieved?" she asked, pleadingly. "Would you rather not have it so?—I could not give him up," she added, with an almost passionate cadence in her voice, and a quick look at Stephen; "but I cannot be quite happy unless you and grandpapa are glad."

"I *am* glad, my darling, *very* glad. If you are happy, it is all I ask," her grandmother said. "I believe we may trust Mr. Hollister, even with our precious Zandy; but I am a jealous mother and grandmother, and cannot readily relinquish my treasures. Put away those tears, my love, and be as happy as you deserve—and as I feel sure you may well be," she added.

"Are *you* glad, too, grandpapa?—I must hear you say it," Zandy added playfully, though earnestly, when her grandfather did not speak at once.

He pressed her bright head against his bosom tenderly, saying, "Yes, my dear child, I am very glad. We didn't expect to be asked for you quite so soon, but your grandmother was no older than you are when I took her away from her home altogether, so I have no right to complain of Mr. Hollister. He has promised, too, not to take you away from us for a year."

"It must be more than a year, if she spends several months of it in New York," said Mrs. Craighead, with smiling emphasis.

"We will try to be reasonable," Mr. Craighead said, nodding reassuringly to Stephen. "Come, my dear, I remember how I felt when we were first engaged: I wanted you all to myself."

Mrs. Craighead lingered until Stephen, who had waited with what patience he could, held out his hands, and until Zandy had laid hers within them; then she went away with her husband, and left them to their happy communings.

19*

THE END.

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