

NELLY BRACKEN,

A Tale of Forty Years Ago.

BY

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PREFACE.

I KNOW I am venturing upon consecrated ground,—I know that where the breezes of Song stir the immortal bay-boughs,—where the mighty tide of Eloquence sweeps along like a rushing river, and

“The Cothurns tread majestic
Down the deep iambic lines,”

my young, untutored steps essay to go. Yet with humility and prayer I take the shoes from off my feet, and make my apology to the noble, stately dwellers in the glorious Mind-Land, by saying that the intensest longings after the True, the Beautiful, the Deathless, have impelled me to labor in the fields of Thought,—only as the child that drops the corn, mayhap, yet with the earnest hope that years may bring strength for higher worthier duty.

JUNE, 1854.

NELLY BRACKEN.

CHAPTER I.

THE OLD HOUSE.

It stood on a hill-side, sloping quietly down into a dell, where a clear pond, supplied by a never-failing spring, slept beneath the shade of spreading maples. The northern gable,—with its huge stone chimney, and pair of small upper windows,—like the nose and eyes of a weather-beaten veteran,—looked out upon a clover lawn, which widened toward the country road about a furlong distant. On the morning side, as Nelly called it, ran a long oaken porch, at the lower end of which nestled a cosy little room, ten feet square. Its only window, looking southward, was covered by a twine trellis, over whose intricate web a busy company of hop-vines wrought a more beautiful curtain than ever graced a royal bed-chamber. Its furniture consisted of a plain, low, cherry bedstead, with fair white coverlet and pillow, three oaken chairs, glistening with the polish of the master-artist, Time, and an old-fashioned toilet-stand, which held a

small looking-glass, whose clear mirror reflected a quaint but elegant vase of Kiangku porcelain, with its simple bouquet of cinnamon roses.

Besides the door leading from the porch into this room, another of larger dimensions, but of the same plain workmanship, opened into the parlor, a small, low room, but pleasant and cheerful. A neat yarn carpet covered the floor, and a home-made tufted rug, whose pattern was an antique basket filled with flowers, lay before the gaping stone fire-place. On the walnut mantelpiece,—so provokingly tall that Nelly, though active as a kitten, could scarcely leap high enough to reach it with the tips of her fingers,—were many rare specimens of shells and minerals; and on one side of the chimney a dark, time-stained book-case stood with its doors ajar, revealing the well-kept treasures on its shelves. Shakspeare and Spencer, Goldsmith and Johnson, Rollin and Livius, with a host of other noble gray-beards, showed, by the glossy smoothness which results from use alone, rather than by any sign of soil or finger-print, that they were not strangers to the inmates of that unostentatious abode. There were two windows in the room; one opening on the porch which was the front entrance of the house, and the other directly opposite. Both were shaded by thin white cambric curtains; but over the back window a thrifty honeysuckle had clambered, and one stray shoot had found its way through the loose window-sash, and peered roguishly from behind the curtain into the room, as if playing at hide-and-seek with the sunshine that had crept through the foliage of the sweet-briar over the porch, and, stealing in at the front window, nestled among the tiger-lilies on the hearth-rug. Opposite the

front entrance, another door opened into the back yard; and a third, facing the fire-place, led into the dining-room, in one corner of which a winding stairway communicated with the upper story, which contained two rooms, whose windows were the veteran eyes, looking north and south. Many an eager and tearful eye had there watched for the return of absent hunters, when the unbroken wilderness frowned around, and the stealthy tread of the Indian scarce crackled the dry twigs beneath his feet; for the old house had been built forty years.

A covered passage connected the dining-room with the kitchen, which was used not only for culinary labors, but served the purpose of a weaving-room also, and a sleeping-apartment for Granny and her husband. In the corner of the yard, beyond the kitchen, stood the meat-house, built of hewn logs. Beside it grew two damson trees, which pelted it familiarly with their velvety fruit, in autumn; and farther up, toward the back window of the little parlor, two large locust trees, which had been twisted together when they were but twigs, caressed each other with their plummy branches, and scattered a shower of blossoms on a long table at their feet, which was used for drying fruit. It had stood there so long, its legs were much decayed; and one of them was so shortened that its length had been supplied by a large stone, now green with moss; and over whose sides the long grass scrambled, as if bent upon bringing table and all under its dominion. Below the kitchen, a little gate opened upon a path bordered with currant-bushes, which led through the kitchen garden to a clump of cherry and box-elder trees that bent lovingly over the spring.

That spring! How beautiful it was, gliding softly

from beneath the gray rocks, and looking up through its fringes of mint and bergamot, like the face of a happy child upturned from its uncultivated curls. And then, too, how like the wanderings of a child were its meanderings down among the spice-bushes that breathed their fragrance over it, like a sister's blessing, as it passed under the fence, and, turning northward through the meadow, ran along by the flower-garden in front of the porch, and leaped into the pond in tiny cascades, over a fall of rocks which Nelly had built there in the early spring! Yes, the simile was perfect—for the pond was the great world, and the brook was little Amy!

All this, or something like it, passed through Nelly's mind, as she sat on the wide shelf-rock at the head of the spring; but remembering that besides taking the fresh water to Granny, Lina had told her to bring in the pasteboards from the back yard, she hastily dipped her pitcher into the spring, and while the clear water dripped like a diamond shower from her little fingers, she ran briskly up the garden-path, and depositing her burthen upon the kitchen-step beside Granny, as the children called the gray-headed old negro woman, she went to the fruit-table to take in the pasteboards Lina had made of old newspapers, and placed there to dry. Granny has looked up from her wool-cards to bless "de hummin' bird," and as Nelly's busy little hands gather up the nice boards, while her young head is busier, mayhap, with the thought of the new calico sun-bonnets Lina has just finished for her, and Lu, and Amy: if you will come with me to the front porch, where we can sit cosily on the wide white steps, in the shade of the cherry-trees, and be undisturbed by any sound—for the twitter

of the cherry-birds, and the low tinkle of Nelly's waterfall, will not annoy us—I will tell you where we are, and who she is.

Roger Bracken emigrated from Virginia to Kentucky in 1780, with an only sister. They had been reared by wealthy parents, and until the brother's eighteenth year, had seen only the sunny side of life. At that time, however, the startling changes brought about by the war with Great Britain, reduced them to orphanage and penury in the course of a few months. The elder Bracken fell in battle, by the side of his son; and his broken-hearted widow lived just long enough afterward to see her children stripped of all earthly possessions. Roger Bracken, left with his young sister entirely dependent upon himself, determined at once to go westward; and, with a party of emigrants, arrived at Lexington, then a rude village, in the midst of the winter of 1780, remembered yet, by one or two aged citizens, as one of unusual and frightful severity. The inhabitants were almost wholly uneducated, except a few who, like Roger Bracken, had received all the advantages then available in the Old Dominion. These few felt keenly the lack of books and society; but they had gone thither determined not to be overcome by trifles—and by constant association with each other, and ever-busy efforts to start some amusement or enterprise that would lighten their heavy labors, they soon dug out of the hard limestone of their wild life a well that slaked their thirst.

Among their number was the family of Mr. Malcolm, and the brothers John and Fielding Bradford, remembered by every Kentuckian as the editors of the first newspaper ever published in the State. The brothers

Bradford had been for some time desirous to establish a paper, but could find no one to undertake the execution of the necessary arrangements; for the perils of the journey to and from the Atlantic towns were too formidable to be encountered lightly. Roger Bracken, however, offered his services, and leaving his sister with Mr. Malcolm's family, proceeded at once to the performance of his arduous duties. It was several months before the first number of the paper was issued, during which time the punctual fidelity of young Bracken had become a proverb, and secured to him the sincerest admiration and trust of the whole community. In the family of Mr. Malcolm, particularly, he found an abiding foot-hold; and, eight years after, received in marriage his only daughter, a fair, frail thing, that had grown up like a star-of-Bethlehem in the wilderness.

Viola Malcolm lost her mother before she learned to lisp her name, and, at the age of five years, was placed in a Moravian school in Pennsylvania, where she remained until her fourteenth year, when, on the death of her grand-mother, her father sold his extensive estates, and removed to Kentucky. She had been taught by her grand-mother, during the three months' vacation of each year, all domestic accomplishments; and although her fingers could glide skilfully over the harpsichord, they were quite as apt in spinning the long white woollen rolls, and shining flax. After their emigration, she had but little time to devote to music, however; for she had no grand-mother now, and there were no kind motherly neighbors to assist her in dyeing the woollens or warping the cloth-webs. So her young head had its share of homely thinking, and but for Granny—dear, good old

Granny!—might have made many a sorry blunder. Granny was born in the Malcolm family, and nursed Viola at her own bosom after the death of her mother; and no mother, no matter how fair her skin or delicate her rearing, could have loved the orphan with a truer love. Viola knew no greater delight than to go to Granny's cabin, after her task of spinning, or some other household business, was ended—for her grand-mother was very orderly, and gave her a daily task—to hear the startling stories she would tell of escapes from the furious red Britishers, and of the terror in which they lived until peace was won. And when she went away to school, no truer kisses were ever bestowed than those she imprinted upon the brown, rude cheek of the faithful slave—no truer tears ever shed than those that fell on her golden tresses from the loving eyes of the old woman, while her untutored lips breathed a tremulous prayer for God's blessing on "de chile."

When Mr. Malcolm determined to go to the West, though tears gathered thicker than ever in her honest eyes at the thought of leaving "de ole home an' Missy's grave," without a murmur she busied herself in arranging all things carefully for the dangerous journey, and through the long travel, hovered about her young charge, comforting and cheering her, by telling, in the strange, beautiful poetry of her race, of those who were cut off from the Promised Land because they murmured; and every night, while the panther screamed above their tent in wilds where the woodman's axe had never been heard, she would sit and talk of Him who had not where to lay His head, or sing some old home-hymn, until the young orphan's blue eyes closed in sleep,

and the dear home-haunts surrounded her again in dreams.

Shortly after Viola's marriage, her father removed to a section of country thirty miles distant. About the same time, a company from Virginia made proposals to Roger Bracken for the purchase of the printing-office. He accordingly sold his property in Lexington, and went with Mr. Malcolm to the vicinity of Frankfort, where a wider sphere of action seemed to be opening. The house to which he took his young wife was a double cabin, built of unhewn logs. But though rude and homely, it was a sweet and happy place. Viola and her sister-in-law made curtains for the little windows, of bleached domestic brought from Virginia, which they looped over deer-antlers in the place of curtain-hooks; and through the long winter evenings, when the few neighbors met together, many a merry dance had they to the music of banjos brought by the mirth-loving negroes from the old home.

Years passed on. Emigrants flocked West from every hamlet on the Atlantic shore, bringing with them many comforts and luxuries; and artisans of every grade were fast smoothing away the roughness of wilderness life with the softening arts of civilization. Roger Bracken's cabin had been supplanted by a neat brick mansion, and a family of children clustered around its happy hearth, or gathered nuts in the beautiful woodlands, whence his sturdy negroes had cleared the under-growth, or flocked about his knee at night to listen, with eager, breathless interest, to his tales of adventure and hair-breadth escapes from the prowling wild beasts and the stealthy Indians. His eldest daughter, Mabel, fair and delicate

as her mother, but inheriting the vigorous intellect of her father, was the pride of his life. She had no teacher but himself; and, under his tuition, became a fit preceptress for her young sisters, thus giving them advantages few could purchase at any price in those primitive days. But tempests sweep over the tenderest blossoms, and the time of trial came to them. After a tedious winter in the legislature at Frankfort, to which Roger Bracken had been elected, he returned home in March, with the seeds of that worst of scourges, winter fever, in his veins. Not all the love of his snow-drop, as he still called his beautiful, girlish-looking wife—not all the care of his patient, untiring Mabel, could stay his feet upon the shelving cliff of life, and he sunk into the sea of death, leaving his helpless ones upon the shore, in a black and fearful night.

For the broad acres he had wrought into fertility and beauty were wrested from his family by one whom he had chosen, above all others, to protect his children and manage his estate. A lawyer with whom he had practised, and who promised the dying man to defend and comfort his stricken family, scarcely waited for the spring grass to cover the grave, until, under a forged claim, apparently time-worn, and which he professed to have found among the musty archives of the State, he obtained possession of the home to which Viola Bracken had been taken, a happy wife, sixteen years before. She was, therefore, compelled to return to the old neighborhood near Lexington, to a small farm Mr. Malcolm bequeathed to Mabel at his death, eight years before. At the time of the opening of our story, they had been living in the old house six years, and the season was the

summer of 1810. Lina, the second daughter, had been married six months. Her husband, Edward Morton, started to New Orleans with a flat-boat load of corn the second month after their marriage, and she was to remain with her mother until his return, in July, when they would go to his farm on the Kentucky river. Mabel, who had gone to Louisville to visit an old friend of her mother's, was hourly expected home; and with her, the son of a gentleman who was their nearest neighbor before their father's death. He was coming to enter the college established in Lexington ten years before, and would remain a few days at Lily Dell, before proceeding onward. Mabel had been missed by all the household—but most of all by Nelly and her little sisters, Lu and Amy. She was so good and gentle always; one sad look from her, when they were wilful and ill-natured, was the severest rebuke they could receive; and through the cold winter days, the pleasant stories she would tell them, which she gleaned from traditionary lore, and clothed in her own beautiful fancies, kept them at her knee many an hour when they would otherwise have been in the snow.

Frail as the young willow her own hand had planted by Nelly's waterfall—fair as the white lily that lifted its face under the boughs of the fragrant lilac—gentle as the welcome air that floated through the vines at the humble cottage-windows—and holy as the Sabbath stillness that lay in the quiet glen like a sleeping seraph, what wonder her presence gave a hallowed peacefulness to her simple home, as if the shadow of some lofty heavenly presence fell among its haunts? Nelly's love for her amounted almost to idolatry. She would sit beside her for hours, gazing into her rapt, Raphael eyes, as she

read and beautified with her exquisite thought-painting, the choice literature with which their library was stored; or, in the shade of the locust trees by the kitchen, during the Sabbath afternoons, repeated the majestic Psalms, and lifted the clear tones of her voice with the deep, mellow cadences of the negroes, singing some grand old hymn. But the greatest joy of all was the weekly Sabbath ride to the little church. Never did Celtic lady, holding her hooded hawk, in the antique days of romance, more lightly sit on her graceful palfrey, than did Nelly behind Mabel, on the crupper of the hardy little pony, holding fast to the saddle-pommel with one hand, and clasping her prayer-book in the other. The church was built on the shore of the Elkhorn, near a cliff called the White Eagle. The road thence wound, through glens and gorges, out into the sloping meadow-lands and maple woods in the neighborhood of their home, which was a mile distant from the river. Ready always, Nelly rode with Mabel on the pony, while the rest of the family went in a quaint old cariole, the only convenience left them of the many they had once enjoyed. One of the church windows opened into Mrs. Bracken's pew; and there, Sabbath after Sabbath, as Nelly sat looking into the dense wood along the banks of the river, and listening, as Mabel's delicate fingers brought out the deep, rich music of the harpsichord, her sweet voice rising heavenwards from the full chords, like the sky-lark's above the trembling melodies of the awakened morning—there where Nature spoke face to face with the Deity, like a child to its father—aspirations quickened in her young spirit, which were inexplicable to her through many a dark and perplexing after-hour.

She was that most unfortunate of all characters, which the world calls *strange*. Oh, that "the world" might learn the meaning of its own language! Strange, yet not a stranger — knowing all, sympathizing with all, yet unknown, unsympathized with by any, because possessed of impulses and hopes incomprehensible to all except the earnest soul whence they emanated, and the few whose spirits may have been stirred by the same lofty influences. Poor child! Lina called her crack-brained; her mother said she was idle and heedless; Lu and Amy made faces at her; and even Jane, the house-maid, would stand and look at her, in some of her uproarious fits of fun, as if she thought the child was beside herself. Mabel alone seemed to read her heart aright; and inwove so skilfully, with every labor, some pleasant thought or project, that Nelly with her could accomplish any task, however difficult it might be. She was so officious, too, she was constantly making blunders. Once, when an old bachelor came to see Mabel, wishing to be extremely polite, (by way of showing how highly she appreciated the especial honor of being permitted by Lina to remain in the parlor), she walked up to him, and taking his hat as he was bowing to her sisters, before he had time to lift it from his head, caught one of his glossy brown locks in her fingers, and lifted off — the top of his head, she thought, in her fright, but only his wig, to his infinite dismay, and to the no small amusement of the quiet but fun-loving Mabel. The wildest tales, too, she believed with perfect faith; and she considered old Jake, the gardener, another Saul of Tarsus, because he firmly declared he had seen the Savior in a vision, and that he

heard the voice of God in the woods one day when he was felling timber.

After Mabel left, Nelly used to ride alone on the pony to church. One Sabbath, returning from morning service, she left the cariole, and was riding carelessly through a deep glen that led off from the main road, when her horse took fright, and darting across the path, threw her on a pile of stones that half-dammed up a little stream — the Silverhorn, as the Indians had named it years before — which tumbled along through the hills, and leaped into the Elkhorn some few miles below the church. For a moment she was insensible; but was soon aroused by feeling the cool water fall over her bruised forehead, and, looking up, beheld the fine blue eyes of a stranger fixed earnestly upon her, while, from an ivory drinking-horn he poured the refreshing water over her face.

"You are hurt," he said, tenderly, as he lifted her from her hard bed, and laid her on the soft moss at the foot of an old sycamore.

"Yes," she replied, hurriedly; "but I must go, for mother will be frightened. Where is Daisy?" she asked; and, springing up, looked eagerly around her.

"Who or what is Daisy?"

"My pony. Oh! I must go — I have been here so long. See, it was high noon when I left the church, and the sun is far behind the White Eagle now," and she pointed up the glen to the stern front of the cliff, that loomed against the sky like a huge arrow-head.

"But you must not go yet," he said; "you are too weak; and besides, you must tell me why you call that cliff the White Eagle."

"Don't you know?" she asked, with a smile of surprise at his ignorance.

"I do not—will you tell me?"

The child reseated herself beside him. "Why, Mabel told me," she began, "that a long while ago a merchant, with his daughter, came down the Ohio river to Fort Washington, (it is Cincinnati, you know, and a great town now), and pitched his tent on the Kentucky shore. He had brought goods of all kinds, to trade away for lands. The night after his arrival, a party of Quapaw Indians, who had come to sell peltries to the people of the fort, passed by the white man's tent. Their chief saw and loved his daughter, and offered all his store of furs and wampum, and even the white eagle plumes on his head, if the father would give him the beautiful Maud for a wife. But she gathered her veil closer over her face, and hid herself within the tent. Still the enamored chief walked slowly round the lodge, day after day, offering from time to time in silence, to the wealthy trader, his store of barbaric bribes. The father gave him no heed, however, and, after a few months, removed to the interior of the State. But the winds of the wilderness were too rough for one who had been reared in tapestried rooms far away over the sea; the delight which the strange, new scenes had begotten in her young heart at first, and which had kept all memories of other times at bay, had passed away, and she sickened and pined for her native air. The White Eagle had followed her, though she knew it not; and one night when she went out from their rude cabin, and looking up to the beautiful, true stars—the only home-companions that cannot be severed from the exiled and the wandering—

murmured, in low, tremulous tones, the name of her dead mother, his proud lips could keep silence no longer; and he went to the cabin-door, and offered his calumet to the stern Englishman, who sat there in the moon-light.

"The Young Dove of the wilderness sings no more," he said. "Does she pine for the gardens in the land of the pale-face, beyond the wide water?"

"The Young Dove is content," replied Morton Ludlow; "but her wing is not used to these forests, and she trembles at her own singing in their solitudes."

"The Dove has no mother to guide her young wings, and her nest has no soft, mossy lining. Morton Ludlow has traded with the tribe of the White Eagle. Has he found the Red Men just?"

"The Quapaws are brave and honorable."

"The warrior drew nearer, and said, in earnest tones, 'The White Eagle loves the beautiful Dove; but she will not live in his eyrie. May he be to her a brother, then, and take her to the wigwam of his mother? She has no one here to sing her fears away, when the skies blacken with tempest, and the Great Spirit's eyes flash, and His voice utters his fierce anger. But the mother of the Eagle will gather the Dove under her wings; and her medicines are sweet and healing. If the Dove will go with the White Eagle one day's journey towards the setting sun, she will find a pleasant nest, and she shall come again when her wing and her voice are strong.'

"Morton Ludlow was touched. He had known the tribe of the White Eagle many months, and had found them ever generous and just. Maud had, indeed, no one to cherish her; and he knew the motherly goodness of the old medicine-woman—for he had eaten hominy in

her wigwam many a night, and slept on her soft, warm furs.

"Will the White Eagle enter the lodge of the pale-face, and rest until the night is past?" he said. "The Dove may go if she will."

"When the morning lifted her dark lashes, and poured the light of her blue eyes upon the wilderness, two horses were standing, ready for travel, before Morton Ludlow's cabin; and before the first rays of the sun had pierced the tree-tops, he came out of the door with his daughter, to go with the Quapaw chief. He fastened her bundle of clothing securely to the Indian's beaded deer-skin saddle, and lifting her to the chief's arms as if she had been a child, for she was too feeble to ride alone, he mounted his own horse, and, at a sign from the Indian, they darted off through the pathless woods. As night came on, clouds gathered in the south, and shut out every star. The darkness was fearful—but they spurred their horses onward. After reaching the river, they would have only to plunge in its gentle tide, and swim to the pleasant wigwams on the opposite shore, where the chief's people were waiting for the papaw fruit to ripen, when they would return across the Mighty River to their tribe at the source of the White-water. As they neared the Elkhorn, the Indian's Black-Arrow swerved and chafed as if beset by some terrible fear; but the White Eagle urged him forward, and when they reached the shore, with a wild, frightful neigh, he leaped down the beetling cliff, and sunk with his riders into the stream below. In the morning, when the Indian youths went in their canoes to the fishing-cove beneath the crag, they found the plumes of the Eagle, and a shred of the Young

Dove's mantle, half-way down the rocks; and following the sound of a frantic shout, they came upon the father, seated upon the topmost peak of the cliff, calling for help for his child. He sat there raving until death kindly took him away at night. From that time forward, over the arrow-head hung a thin white mist, like the down of the dandelion; and they said the spirit of the white maiden brooded there. You may see it every morning; but Mabel says it is only the vapor from the river below. She told me the story, which I know by heart."

The stranger looked at the child a moment without speaking. Then parting back the wet curls from her forehead, he said—"Little maiden, when I left the far-off halls of my father, in a colder clime than this, to seek these wilds, where malignity and envy have not found their way, I did not expect to find such blossoms as grow here, nor such music as some of the wild-birds make. I will let you go now; but you must tell me your name first."

"Nelly," she said, "Nelly Bracken. What is yours?"

"Call me Godfrey," he replied, with a smile; "that is my name in your language." He lifted her to her little saddle—for Daisy had been quietly browsing under the trees while she related the legend—and said, in a sorrowful tone; "You must not forget me, Nelly. I am going many leagues away; but will you sometimes think of a wanderer in the West, and pray to the God you worship to protect him?"

Nelly's eyes filled with tears. "I will never forget you," she said. "You were patient all the time I talked about the White Eagle, and did not laugh at me, as the school-boys do. They like Mother Goose, and Jack the

Giant-Killer. Oh, no! I will think of you all the time, and pray for you to be delivered from plague, pestilence, and famine, and from battle and murder, and from sudden death."

"Is there no other prayer you will offer for me, Nelly?"

"What more shall I ask?" she said. "You love God and nature—are you not happy?" and she looked inquiringly into his face from her seat on the restive Daisy, for there was something in its expression which troubled her.

"You are a little sibyl, Nelly," he replied—"but you must go."

"Good-bye, then," she said, offering him her hand, and, with a low whistle to Daisy, she darted down the glen.

It was quite late when she reached home, and her mother was much annoyed by her absence. Nelly told of her adventure, but instead of exciting any interest in her story, was admonished to keep the straight road thenceforth. She then went to Lina, to tell her how pleased the stranger seemed with the story she related to him; but she met with a severer rebuff than ever, and was told to "stop her nonsense, and go spread the supper-table." How she wished Mabel would come! It would be so nice to tell her about the kind stranger's words, and his request that she, a little girl only twelve years old, should pray for a grown-up gentleman like him. Lina would not listen to her vagaries, as she called them; and her mother was so occupied with household cares, she had no time to give to such fancies; so the child sought companionship, during Mabel's long absence,

in the fine scenery around her home, thus forgetting so often the commands of her mother and sister, that the charge of wilful disobedience was a familiar verdict against her. The country, for miles back from the river, was gently undulating, and though the woodman's axe and the farmer's plough-share had softened the shade of the forest, and brought from the rich soil various plants besides its first-born children, in many places the primitive beauty of the woods remained unchanged. It was a rare thing for Nelly to visit the forests; for she could not go alone, and her cousins, when they went hunting, did not like to be hindered by a little girl; but there was ample space for her busy feet to travel over, within the enclosure of her mother's hundred-acre farm.

Sparkling streams, like the bright thoughts in her fresh, expanding heart, glistened among the hills, and all over the grass, in the shady maple pastures, white and blue violets were scattered like gems, and the crimson mountain-pink lifted its plumed head to the light. But most of all she loved the dell beyond the apple-orchard. A grey cliff arose on one side, overgrown with ivy. On its summit grew a gnarled elm, which bent over the rocks, and threw a thick drapery of grapevines down into the shadows below. There, on a wide, flat stone, she would sit for hours with her knitting, and listen to the robin singing in the tree above her, or watch the blue-bird building her nest in a hollow stump near the hemp-field, while the wind sung through the grapevines, and the brook at her feet kept time. She had just returned from the glen rock when Lina sent her out for the pasteboards, as related in the opening of this chapter.

"Will you look at that child, Lina?" said Mrs. Bracken, as she sat by the open window of the dining-room. "Go and see what she can be doing."

Lina went softly to the old fruit-table, whereon Nelly lay full-length, her bonnet thrown back, and her brown hair hanging all over her features. She was looking intently at one of the pasteboards, and singing, to a low, plaintive melody, which Lina had never heard before, Burns' beautiful song, "Mary's Dream."

"She is a queer child, mother," Lina said, as she re-entered the room. "She does not know the sun is browning her skin; and even if she did, she would not care. She has forgotten everything in the world, and is this moment stalking along the coast of Scotland with Sandy's ghost, that Burns talks about in his crazy story."

"What are you talking about, Lina? What is Nelly doing?"

"She has composed a tune to those words of Burns, and is singing it there in the sun," Lina replied; and, thrusting her head from the window, with a mischievous smile, called her in a shrill, half-angry key. Nelly started up, and hastily gathering the pasteboards under her arm, brought them in.

"What were you doing, that you forgot so soon, Nelly?" Lina asked. "I sent you for those pasteboards an hour ago."

"Nothing," the child answered; and her cheek reddened with shame. She felt as guilty as if she had been thieving, no doubt; and yet it was an indescribable pleasure to her to get off by herself, and sing broken, melancholy strains which would have shocked the exquisite ear of an amateur.

CHAPTER II.

When ye stood up in the house
With your little childish feet,
And in touching life's first shows,
First the touch of love did meet—
When the worst recorded change
Was of apple dropped from bough—
When love's sorrow seemed less strange
Than love's treason can seem now.

E. B. BROWNING.

ALL was bustle and preparation throughout the day; for Mabel was expected home in the afternoon, with Robert Blackburn, and the house must be ready to receive the son of their wealthy friend. Mrs. Bracken, accustomed from her earliest youth to fill the first place in every community, felt keenly the reverses in which she was left to struggle after her husband's death; and when Mabel wrote that Robert Blackburn would accompany her home, she remembered with mortification the elegance and comfort that surrounded her when, five years before, he used to ride through her fine maple pastures with Mabel and Lina, on their beautiful ponies, or read some stirring story in her spacious drawing-rooms.

Mrs. Bracken had but three servants left after the sale of her husband's estate — Granny and her husband, and Jane, their grand-daughter; and as the farm to which

she was compelled to return was small, she rented it to laboring men in the neighborhood, who gave her one-third of the crop for rent; she reserved, however, the orchard, garden, and woodlands. Still remembering the lessons of thrift taught her by her grand-mother, she instructed her young daughters in all household labors, and found little difficulty, with the aid of the three slaves, in getting through the many duties of farm-life. From the time of her marriage until the cares of a fatherless family were thrown upon her, she had turned with all a child's trustfulness to Granny, whose humble, homely counsels were ever ready and efficient. But the old woman could not bear to see the children labor as they did, and would go to the wood-shed or the spring herself, however tired she might be, rather than see them toiling up the spring-path with a pail of water, or bringing in wood for the winter fire, though she knew their rosy cheeks grew all the brighter for it, and their young sinews tougher and stronger. Nelly was always her favorite, and when she would hear the child's clear voice come out of the open window in the long summer days, as she sat spinning under the trees, her feet would ply the treadle faster, as if new strength were given her by the tones of her young pet's happy song. For when her sisters would go with the neighbors' children to fish in the Elkhorn, though Nelly might go also for a while, to gather wild flowers, and listen to the streams, as they stole with silvery laughter down the grim vine-bearded gorges — when all were occupied watching their floats on the smooth, dark water, she would steal home and sit with Granny in the shade, singing, or reading in the old family Bible, and telling all she could remember of

Mabel's teachings in reference to the different incidents recorded in the Scriptures. There was no pleasure greater than this to her; for though she was at times mirthful even to boisterousness, she had a peculiar love, solemn and enthusiastic, for the sublime and wonderful narrations of the Bible; and, in her gayest moods, would turn instantly to hear or read anything connected with these holy themes — her strongest emotion being a soul-pervading reverence for Divine things.

All the morning she had been sitting with Granny by the kitchen-fire, assisting her in cleansing the quaint silver service her mother had brought from Virginia, and listening to the faithful creature talk about "Old Missis," and the splendid home they left in Culpepper, with its great dining-room and mahogany side-board, that rested on lion's feet of solid brass, and was filled with sparkling cut-glass decanters, and tall, slim goblets, clear as air, until she sighed that she had not lived thirty years sooner, and wondered if she would ever go where such elegant things could be seen. Granny's eyes filled, and taking the child on her knee, she stroked the long brown masses of wavy hair, and said:

"De Lord knows bes', but it looks powerful hard for quality children to come down fum gran' livin' to sech as dis."

Poor Granny! her religion never failed her; but when she would see her pets, with their "born blood," as she called it, doing the drudgery of servants with so much cheerfulness, her faith would sometimes stagger, and she would seem blind to the wisdom of Him who "scattereth the hoar frost like ashes." If they had been fretful and restless, she would have been far less troubled; but their

cheerful patience and industry made them appear transfigured, as it were; and, to her simple reasoning, a paradise would have been the only proper theatre for their refined and active spirits. Her mind was too primitive to understand the philosophy which teaches that the most subtle and delicate natures are, of necessity, the most unfortunate, inasmuch as their fine susceptibilities are most likely to be stung by sorrow — an assertion which is a slanderous blasphemy in the face of God Himself; as if He who gave the sky-lark her voice had not given her a wing also, that she might soar, singing, above darkness and tempest. She only knew they had but little in common with their neighbors; and failing to see in the heavenly harmony they enjoyed at home, an exemplification of the truth, that the God who gave them their rare talents and capabilities has never done anything in vain, she could not avoid sometimes contrasting their worldly condition with that of others, and wishing she could know what was meant by the promise to the good, of the joys of Heaven not only, but an hundred-fold more in this life.

"Dah now, wash de whitenin' off your hands, honey, 'case Ponto's barkin', an' I spec' Miss Sally's come."

"But I don't want to go, Granny," Nelly said. "I came to help you clean all the silver, and you are not half done. Let Sally come in here. I can talk to her better here than I will in the house, if you make me go away."

"Let Miss Sally come in *here*!" Granny exclaimed. "No indeed, chile. She sha'n't come in here, jes' to go 'way and say she seed you workin' like a nigger."

"But she's a good girl, Granny, and doesn't teaze me as Charles and Sam do."

"Well, anyhow, she mought happen to say what she foun' you at, and dat would be 'nough for dem boys. You go in, dat's a lady, an' ole Granny can soon do de balance."

Nelly was not by any means convinced; but hearing the voice of her cousin calling her from the parlor window, she hastily washed her hands, and left the kitchen, albeit not so willingly as she had entered it.

Roger Bracken's sister had married, several years before the union of her brother and Viola Malcolm, a gentleman whose acquaintance they made shortly after their arrival in Lexington. She removed with him, soon after the marriage, to a plantation a few miles distant, and near the little farm Mr. Malcolm had given his daughter. Her husband, Mr. Van Zandt, though a man of many excellent traits, was a rude, uneducated, eccentric person, who boasted of having risen by his own "hard licks," as he termed it, from the grade of a hod-carrier to the enviable station of a gentleman farmer; and cited his own case as an example of the inutility of tuition for boys in any but the merest rudiments of an education. Among other peculiarities, he possessed an unconquerable propensity for teasing everything animate, whether human or beast, and would walk out of his way at any time, to tread on the cat's tail, or give his wife's rocking-chair a tilt when she was least expecting it.

Margaret Bracken, though as welcome as the sunshine in the house of Mr. Malcolm, was of that nervous, hypochondriac temperament that is ever imagining itself a burthen to others; and though fully aware of the dispa-

rity between herself and Mr. Van Zandt, persuaded herself she would be happier to be his wife than to remain where she was; and accordingly married him, at the age of seventeen. She found him widely different from her brother, and his apparent harshness and recklessness of speech made her often unhappy, especially after the trials of maternity threatened the last remnant of her failing health. Frequently confined for months to a sick bed, she missed the tender nurture she had ever received at the hands of those she had so rashly left; and in moments of despondency would grieve that so little sympathy was offered by her husband. She never uttered her complaints, however, fearing a harsh reply might be her only reward; but a settled, peevish melancholy, and a habit of vaguely-expressed discontent, made him irritable and indifferent, because unable to discover why she was so very miserable. He never dreamed that *he* was the cause, because he never meant to offend; and knowing she was provided with every comfort, he chafed that she should be so ungrateful; and being entirely barren of tact, he blunderingly told her so one day, as she sat sighing by the fire, in her room. The words went to her heart like a sword; and from that day all joy was gone from her life. After the birth of her fourth child, she died suddenly; and within a year after, Mr. Van Zandt married a widow lady from a neighboring county, an affectionate, sensitive woman, but resolute and high-spirited, who quickly understood his humors, and bore with him, or remonstrated, as her judgment dictated. He revered her opinions; and it was remarked by all his friends, that her influence over him so softened the roughness of his nature, he manifested a greater degree

of delicacy and feeling than any one imagined he possessed. Was it her influence solely? May it not have been that she suited him better than his dead wife, and because his heart was satisfied, his life was pleasant?

Having but one child herself, the second Mrs. Van Zandt was indeed a mother to her husband's children; and Sally, who was an infant when her own mother died, loved her with all a child's affection. Her three brothers inherited their father's peculiar traits; but her step-brother was like his mother, and though droll and mischievous, had a heart full of warmth and tenderness. Tony Langford was a favorite everywhere. There was no coon-hunt in the whole county where his shrill tin-trumpet was not heard reverberating through the wild gorges of the hills at night—no seine-drag in the Elkhorn without his capacious net, and bared, sinewy arm—no deer-stalking without his steady rifle and well-trained hounds. One of his dogs, particularly, he loved, he said, next to his sister. He was a cross between the mastiff and grey-hound, and the best bear-dog in the county—a large, beautifully-formed animal, with an occasional tawny spot, and hair soft as silk fringing his dew-lap. Sancho was the privileged lord of the household, and received his regular meal of bread and milk under the table at his master's feet, often to the annoyance of Mrs. Van Zandt, whose scrupulous neatness as a house-keeper was often sorely tried by his careless scattering of soaked crumbs about the drugget.

There was no holiday to Sally and her little cousins like the privilege of going squirrel-hunting with Tony and his dog. But they dared not go near Tony's cast-off coat and game-bag, if he had placed Sancho to guard

them; for the dog had been taught to protect them from intruders, and would have sprung at the throats even of his young play-mates, if they had trespassed on his charge. Nelly always managed to stray off from the rest during such excursions, for there was little sport in the hunt to her, and as her mother would allow her to venture farther into the woods with Tony than when alone, her wild love of nature ran riot with her. It was so pleasant to get quite out of sight, under some tree, leaning over the dark cliffs of the Elkhorn, and listen to the low ripple of the water a hundred feet below, or think of the strange legends Mabel had told her about the Indian girls who braided mountain-pinks and lady's slippers in their hair in those glens, fifty years before, while they smiled to see their beautiful brown faces in the clear mirror-like coves where the water stole away as if to rest from its sparkling race. Was it a blessing or a curse, that quick appreciation of the beautiful, that lively recognition of nature's inner life, that spirit which would not, because it could not, be tramelled by the hum-drum monotony of every-day life, but sought, like the wild bee, honey even in its labors; and loved the rustle of the leaf, the tinkle of the runnel, the stately dithyrambic of the wind; and thrilled in trembling adoration under the Divine beauty of the silent night, before the young lips could utter or understand the thoughts whose hypogenesis was stirring, even then, the young soul's teeming nebulæ?

Was it a blessing or a curse, to be thus keenly alive to the loveliness of the creation, and, for that very reason, to be cut off from nearly all human companionship? Nelly loved Anthony-over, and Hop-scotch, and Hood-

man-blind, as well as any of her play-mates. No one threw the ball over the old School-house roof with surer aim; no little foot could drive the quoit through the labyrinthine Scotch with daintier skill; no ear catch more quickly than hers the half-suspended breath of the huddling or flying children in Blind-man's buff, or hold the captives with a tighter grasp. But when she would propose to them a ramble down the Silverhorn, or the recitation of some old historic legend, they would turn up their noses with an air of scorn, and say she was trying to be like grown-up folks, or else was aping Miss Fay, an antiquated Englishwoman who taught in the log school-house several years before, and was a bundle of nerves, and timidity, and poetic feeling. Then she would turn to Lu and Amy, but when they were not romping with the school-children, they were busy making flutes of pumpkin-leaf stalks, and screaming with laughter at the outlandish music they made, or building mud-houses under the maple-trees by the pond, or devising some headlong mischief in some other quarter; so, a feeling of loneliness would come over her, which made her seem sullen; and then her mother would call her careless and wayward, and she would go off to the orchard—her refuge from all annoyances—and wonder if she were indeed her mother's child? She was so different from all the rest, they said: surely some poor, unhappy, womanlike Jochabed must have left her in the woods, where Mrs. Bracken perhaps found her, and took care of her out of pity.

"Mrs. Bracken," she would repeat to herself; and the words sounded so strange and cold, she would lie down on the grass and cry, and wish she could find her own

mother, or some one to tell her how to be like other children, or else that it was no harm to be different. At last she opened her heart to Mabel—gentle, thoughtful, sympathizing Mabel—and, oh! what a “feast of fat things” was opened to her thenceforth! Every duty, every task was transformed into pleasure, and a new life was imparted to each enjoyment. Vague indefiniteness became clear perception; for she saw now that another soul had emotions like her own; and therefore she knew they were neither sinful nor visionary. It was a knowledge that her little heart revelled in; and, though she could not have told why, her contentment was none the less serene for being the result of a lesson learnt by intuition.

Few are aware how much interest children take in the affairs of grown-up persons, or how companionable they can be. They forget that the child, though fond of toys and play, is an immortal being; whose spirit, like a young vine, is continually sending out its delicate tendrils, asking for support and training, that it may drink in life from the earth and atmosphere, and receive vigor to develop its priceless fruit. Oh, pass it not by unheeded! Plant the prop of uprightness securely in the fertile soil of faith. Keep far from its neighborhood the brambles of prejudice and earthly-mindedness, that the sunshine of truth and knowledge may give it the increase and strength it craves; and dig the soil about its roots with the diligence of a holy purpose, that the dews and showers of Divine grace may impart their refreshing, fruitful influence. So shall thy labor be blest indeed, and a teeming harvest be thy sure reward.

We all know how instinctively little children go to their parents to confide each baby joy or sorrow, to ask questions about every perplexing thing, and with what implicit faith they believe each word uttered by parental lips. What then is the reason, as they grow older, they become shy and reserved; seeking any one sooner than a parent for companionship? Is it because their natures grow perverse, and an irrevocable necessity makes a breach where there was so sweet a union once? God forbid! But the multiplying cares of life engross the thoughts of their parents—there is no longer the half-articulate prattle to amuse and attract—the trembling, dimpled hand outstretched for help to guide the little tottering feet; and they are chidden for being troublesome, when their minds are only asking their rightful, needful food. It is not strange, then, that tendencies which, if they had been properly fostered, would have given vigor and beauty to the tree of character, become gnarled deformities, obstructing the flow of the intellectual and moral life which would have perfected the fairest flowers and choicest fruits of human culture; and disrespect and disobedience, like canker-worms, distort and corrupt what was lovely and pure at first. “Like begets like”—and if parents would have their children respectful and confiding, they must show a like disposition. The difference is not so great between the child-man and the man-child, as some are inclined to think. Children know this—and when we say, “Do this or that, *I* command it,” the embryo man in that baby-figure at once secretly replies, “I am I also,” and rebels inwardly, though obedience may and will follow, through fear. But if we say, “Come, let us do thus and so,” and

show our own interest in the duties we wish them to perform, how gladly the light feet follow ours, and the bright, sweet eyes look upward to our faces, radiant with willingness and joy!

This was the secret of Mabel's unbounded influence over Nelly. She became a child with her, and thus gently but surely led her on from one degree of improvement to another, until the child herself was surprised at the advancement she had made, having felt neither disinclination nor fatigue. And Mabel, young, feeble, and inexperienced, how came she by the knowledge which many who have lived four times her years, and given birth to many children, never learn? She was taught it by Him "who spake as never man spake;" who, though He made Arcturus, Orion, and the Pleiades, and hung the earth upon nothing, yet humbled Himself not only to take our earthly condition, but to be our servant. And still we, who profess to imitate Him, because of the few boastful years between us and infancy, vaunt ourselves in our bloated pride, forgetful that the highest aim He has set before us is to become as little children. Mabel Bracken, though but twenty-one, had thought more than many whose age and responsibilities are greater. From her childhood she had studied the Holy Scriptures, not only as her chief duty, but her highest privilege; and the more her cultivated mind strengthened beneath the varied knowledge with which her industry was continually fertilizing it, the more childlike and humble she became. Yet, with all this, there was no cant nor over-righteousness about her. She rarely ever talked of religion, except to the unlettered poor in her mother's neighborhood, who loved her simple teachings

far more than pulpit lectures. To such persons it was her sweetest pleasure to talk about the lowliness of Him who glorified poverty by his humble life, and whose chosen representatives were the poor and the despised.

But though, as a general thing, her tongue was mute upon religious subjects, each day of her life was a consistent, beautiful sermon, the more impressive and effectual because so unobtrusively taught. Nelly loved her more than she did her mother; for although Mrs. Bracken was neither austere nor cold-hearted, she could not see the bent of Nelly's disposition, and the child, failing to find what she longed for in the maternal bosom, sought refuge in the sister's gentle spirit. Wo, wo, that the white, soft arms whose clasp we love must crumble away to the dust of death, teaching our souls the bitter truth, that only in the spiritual existence the fond embraces of our beloved ones will never relax, nor the dear lips be palsied by the touch of the Destroyer.

CHAPTER III.

Dear pilgrims in the holy land,
 The Orient of your years,
 The angels have filled up your scrip
 With beauty, mirth, and tears;
 And crowned your brows with nameless flowers
 And buds that time shall ope,
 And given into your little hands
 The vernal staff of Hope.

READ.

"SEE what a fine cake Aunt Sophie has sent us!" Amy Bracken said to Nelly, as she entered the parlor, where Sally Van Zandt was lifting a neat, smooth napkin from a flat willow basket. "Aunt sent it over to be cut when Mabel comes," she continued, "I wish she would make haste and come now—I want a slice, don't you, Lu? I wonder if it is pound-cake or fruit-cake? Let's pinch off a little bit of the glazing and see"—and she straightway thrust her little fingers into the tempting confection.

"Why, Amy, what will Lina say?" Nelly exclaimed. "And it is Mabel's cake, too; and maybe something has happened to her, and if she should never come home alive, how sorry you would be that you disturbed her cake."

Amy's eager hand was withdrawn instantly, and her

small, sparkling eyes looked all the brighter for the tears gathering in them.

"I did n't think," she said.

"Well, suppose Mabel should never come, must we let the cake spoil, Nelly?" inquired Lu, with mischievous perversity. "I speak for cutting it, if she is not here by to-morrow. My mouth waters now;" and she smacked her lips greedily.

"You are such a wicked girl, Lucy," said Nelly, half-angrily; and, lifting the cake from the basket, started towards the dining-room with it.

"Just see Nelly now," persisted Lu. "She feels very grand because mother let her help Granny make cakes and lady-fingers yesterday, and wants to pretend she doesn't care anything about goodies; but I know the reason. I saw her eating the dough before the cakes were baked, and she sickened herself so she can't eat any more sweet things."

Nelly's face reddened; for though she wanted to keep the cake from a different motive altogether, she knew she had eaten a goodly share of the dough; but she felt still more mortified because Sally and Amy shouted with laughter at Lu's tormenting drollery.

"Tony told me he would come over, after dinner, with his gun, and take us all hunting, Nelly, if Aunt Viola will let you go," Sally said, as Nelly re-entered the room, after depositing the cake in the cupboard.

"And you are going to stay all day with us, ain't you, Sally?" the children exclaimed delightedly, seeing their cousin draw her knitting from a gingham reticule, and fasten a little red merino stay, with its goose-quill sheath, securely to her side,

"Yes," she replied. "Mother told me if I would knit twenty rounds on my stocking, I might play the rest of the day; and if Aunt will give you the same task, Nelly, we can race, and I know we can get done before dinner, so we can be ready to go with Tony. He says he will take us to the Rattlesnake Cove, if we don't keep him waiting when he comes."

Nelly went to the pantry, on the side of the passage leading to the kitchen, where Mrs. Bracken and Lina were putting away some new-made jellies; and receiving permission to carry out Sally's proposition, returned to the little back window where the children sat, and was soon busy with her cousin, knitting in a stripe of blue worsted for a mark. In the meantime Jane, the house-girl, had brought a basket of peas and beans for Lu and Amy to prepare for cooking, and the little party were busy as bees at their several tasks, when the outer door of the dining-room opened.

"Hush! I hear Lina coming," said Lu; "and if she catches us hulling peas and stringing beans in the parlor, she'll make us scatter in a hurry," and gathering up the basket, she tossed beans and hulls into it indiscriminately, and darted out the back-door. Amy caught up the corners of her apron, and flew after her with a shout, not waiting to pick up the strings she had carelessly thrown on the floor.

Lina entered. "Those children are more trouble than they are worth," she said. "But all this trash is your fault, Nelly, for you are old enough to take some interest in keeping the house in order. Why didn't you tell them to go in the yard or the kitchen to string the beans? You know what a litter they always make."

"I forgot it, Lina," Nelly replied. "Sally and I were busy knitting in our marks, and I didn't think of it until I heard you coming."

"That's always the way," was the rejoinder. "You get your head full of one thing, and are deaf and dumb and blind to everything else."

Nelly stooped down to pick up the scattered fibres. When she arose to take them out, her eyes were full of tears. Lina was gone.

"I wouldn't take a scolding from her, if I were you, Nelly," Sally said. "It's none of your business to oversee your little sisters, and make them hate you. Besides, you had your work to do."

"Yes, but she has told me so often about neglecting the parlor, I am ashamed of being so forgetful. I ought to have proposed to you and the children to go out into the shade at first, and then they would not have made fun of me for trying to oversee them, which they would have done if I had told them to go out as Lina said. I wish I could always think, like other people—I believe I never shall be able to learn anything," and her tears fell faster.

"You know more than Lina now," said Sally, feeling as ill toward Lina as was possible for her sunshiny nature; "and she has no business scolding you. She is none of your mother, nor your mistress neither. Why didn't you tell her so? I would."

"Because I don't mean to talk back to her any more as I used to do, even if she is rough to me sometimes. Mabel says I ought to remember how good she is, to clean the house and take so much work off my hands; and even if she does forget and say harsh things, that will not excuse me for doing the same. And then I want to be

confirmed next summer when the bishop comes, and if I say and do wicked things any more I shall not be fit to be a member of the church."

"I don't see how you can help saying sharp things back," Sally replied. "It makes me fret even for Charles and Sam to teaze me in fun, and I know I should nearly fight if they found fault with me in earnest."

"It was hard at first," Nelly said; "but before Mabel went away I determined I would never say ugly things to anybody again, if I could help it. I very often forget, and then I feel so unhappy. It is much better and happier to be good, Sally. Come, let us go out under the locust trees, where Lu and Amy are. It is so shady and pleasant, and maybe Granny will sing to us. She is twisting some yarn for our winter stockings, and she always sings when she spins on the little wheel."

They went out. Lu and Amy were perched on the fruit-table, finishing their work, and Granny, near by, sat before her spinning-wheel, humming a low, solemn tune, as her feet kept time on the creaking treadle-board.

"That's the tune she used to sing to mother when she was a baby," Nelly whispered, as they drew near and seated themselves on the long grass behind the old woman's chair.

"Sing the words, will you, Granny?" Nelly softly asked.

The old woman began and sung—first repeating each couplet, after the manner of the Baptist ministry—the following hymn:

"Hark, my soul, it is the Lord—
'Tis the Saviour, hear his word!
Jesus speaks, and speaks to thee—
'Say, poor sinner, lovest thou me?"

"I delivered thee when bound,
And when wounded healed thy wound;
Sought thee wandering, set thee right,
Turned thy darkness into light."

"Lord, it is my chief complaint
That my love is weak and faint;
Yet I love Thee, and adore!—
Oh for grace to love thee more!"

After she had ended, Nelly said, "Now sing 'Rain, oh rain,' please, Granny."

"God A'mighty bless de chile!" said the old woman with a smile. "She go to church an' hear de gran' sarms and hymes, an' den come ax ole Granny to sing 'black folks' tune.'"

"Yes, Granny, for there is as much music in your black folks' tune as there is in the church anthems, I think," the child replied.

Granny straightened herself with a satisfied air, and smoothing the folds of the white cotton kerchief pinned across her round fat shoulders, began a stirring, soulful song. The words and melody were composed by her own race. Each stanza began with some allusion to the patriarchs and prophets; and when the negroes met for religious worship, which they did every Sabbath afternoon in the school-house, two or three of them would sing alone, and the rest would join in the chorus. Granny sung,

"Good old Moses went to glory from the army of the Lord,
Good old Moses went to glory from the army."

CHORUS. Rain, oh rain, oh rain, my Saviour,

Rain, oh rain, good Lord send it down!

Send it down among the people in the army of the Lord,
Send it down among the people in the army."

At each repetition of the chorus Nelly and her sisters joined in the song, and though the voices of the whole four were untutored save by Him who teaches the birds and winds and waters, their music was harmonious and impressive; and the droning hum of the wheel, the click of Nelly's busy needles, and the whispery rustle of the feathery locust trees above them, made an accompaniment beautiful and sweet, as if Labor gave her willing voice to Faith, and the holy tones of Nature breathed the benison of heaven.

But it was time for Granny to return to the kitchen. Jane had been lately installed in the old woman's place as cook, and besides instructing her in the culinary mysteries, she must look after the tins, and see that everything was kept in the right place; for Jane would be careless and untidy sometimes, and forget to hang up the gourd or empty the slops, all of which worried her no little.

It was quite early in the afternoon when Tony Langford, with his dog and gun, entered the lawn in front of Mrs. Bracken's cottage; but the children had already been seated more than half an hour on the porch, watching eagerly to catch the first glimpse of him as he opened the gate. Amy had been pouting a little because her mother thought the ramble would be too long for her young feet, but the others pleaded so earnestly for her, she was permitted to go, and every face was beaming in eager anticipation of the coming sport.

"All ready?" Tony asked, as they bounded over the stile to meet him. Then throwing his shot-pouch as a matter of course across Lucy's shoulders, he turned off to the left, and crossing the bars that opened into a rye-

field skirting the forest, he led the way along a narrow path, and with his young companions was soon far into the depths of the wood.

"Now, Tony, let me shoot that one," Lucy pleaded, as the bark of a third squirrel was heard in the thick boughs of a tree near the brink of the Elkhorn. "You have killed two; and you know you promised to let me try the very next time we went hunting, if I would hit the mark on the gate-post."

"Take steady aim then, Lu," he said with a smile, as the daring little creature lifted the gun. The squirrel was quite near, on a young oak tree which was bent almost to the ground. He stood behind her, and stretching forward his arm, aided her in keeping the gun steady. In a moment her eager fingers pulled the trigger, and the squirrel gave a slight, shrill bark, and clutched at a twig of the tree.

"I'll get him!" she shouted, while lithe as a kitten she ran up the curved trunk, and seizing the wounded animal, leaped laughing into Tony's arms.

"Bravo, my little huntress," he said, as he kissed her cheek. But Lucy's shouts were ended, and giving one troubled look at the harmless thing writhing in her hand, she hid her face on his shoulder, and burst into tears.

"Fie, Lu, let me kill the thing," he said, as he lifted her to a mound made by the roots of a tree blown down years before, and attempted to take the crippled squirrel from her.

"No, no, don't kill it," she entreated; "oh, I'm so sorry you taught me to shoot that hateful gun."

"But it will die, anyhow, Lu; see, its shoulders are broken, and you don't want to see it suffer, I know."

"Take it, then," she said. "But I will never shoot even a popgun any more, and I won't love anybody that hunts."

"I will see to that," he replied with a well-assured air, as he took the animal, and with his long jack-knife severed its head. Then seating himself beside her, he succeeded at last in diverting her, though for some time she turned her head away petulantly, as if he had been the offender. But he talked about the Rattlesnake Cove, which was almost in sight, and which she and Amy had never seen; and in a little while she was tripping lightly beside him, still bearing the shot-pouch, and listening with almost suspended breath as he told her of the leaps he sometimes took among those cliffs when he went coon-hunting with the neighbor-boys, and had no light but the moon and stars.

Nelly, with Sally and Amy, was some distance back, and knew nothing of Lucy's unfortunate adventure. Though Tony had charged them not to lag behind, Nelly's fondness for the half-hidden by-paths, and the blossoms that grew amid the clefts of the rocks and in the rich dark earth beside old logs and stumps, had so often led her there before, every spot was familiar to her; and she wandered away from the direct route without any fear, knowing Tony was near enough to hear her call and come to her assistance in case of danger. But there was nothing for her to dread, and it took but little coaxing to induce Sally to loiter with her; and then Amy, unused to such excursions, could not keep pace with Tony and the deer-footed Lucy.

Nelly had not been through that part of the wood since the fall before, when with Mabel and Lina, and Edward

Morton and Edgar Cameron, the beloved young pastor of the White Eagle church, she had gathered nuts amid the red rustling leaves. Young as she was, a strange feeling came over her at the remembrance of that happy season, with the many changes that had colored the intervening time. Christmas eve Lina and Edward Morton were married, and Nelly shuddered as she remembered the pallor that overspread Mabel's features, when just after pronouncing the benediction, Edgar Cameron had to be borne to the little bed-room in the second story, adjoining her own, where he lay week after week in a painful and dangerous illness. She remembered how Lina cried when Edward said his boat was ready, in February, and that he must go to Frankfort, to get everything necessary for himself and the men who were to assist him with his cargo down the river. And then Mabel's patient, uncomplaining look, when Edgar Cameron resolved to go also, in the belief that the journey would restore his shattered health. She thought how different, also, were their parting gifts: Lina's, a bright guard-chain, woven of many-colored beads, and Mabel's, a small morocco bible, faded and worn with age and use; and she wondered why Mabel had n't bought a new bible, or else found something else to give him. She could not understand it then; but she learnt well and bitterly enough in after years, the wonderful magic that changes the most unsightly gifts into treasures the heart esteems above all price. Only two of the merry party that gathered nuts there in autumn were left in Lily Dell,—herself and Lina. Mabel, however, was expected before nightfall, and hopeful letters from Morton and his companion gave promise of their return also before many days.

With all these thoughts,—but half-defined it is true,—floating through her brain, she wandered lazily about, anon stumbling across an old root, or stepping suddenly down into a sink, to the alternate amusement and vexation of Sally and Amy, until Tony's loud halloo brought her back to herself; when hurrying on with her companions, the bend in the river near the cove was soon reached. Tony and Lu had been waiting some time for them, and as it was growing late, he hurried them on without giving them a moment's rest. They had to descend the cliff by a steep rugged pass, to the water's edge, and then follow a path along the brink of the river, which led to a rift opening toward the north, about fifty feet in length. At its head a deep cove was hollowed out, as if by art, at the further end of which a low, narrow opening led into a cave which had been explored by Bill Donald to the extent of a mile or more. A small, never-failing stream of water, cold as ice, ran out from it, which about half-way down the gorge had hollowed a deep smooth bed in the limestone, thus forming an abundant spring. A petrified grape-vine trailed over the outer entrance, which was wide and pointed, like the vestibule of some grey old Gothic church; and from the resemblance the vines bore to a coil of serpents, the first settlers had given the place its name, though it would have been as worthily bestowed literally; for the enemy of the woman, having been driven from the heights by the steady irresistible advance of civilization, sought refuge in unfrequented spots like this, and was still to be dreaded, even by the most daring. Nelly had never seen the cove before; for whenever she had been in that part of the wood, she was in company with Lina or

Mabel, neither of whom would venture down the cliff with her; and it would be difficult to say with what delight she clambered over the rough stones, holding Amy by the hand and filling her pockets with pebbles.

After returning to the wood, Tony proposed to them to go with him to see Widow Donald, whose house was quite near the river. He had some stockings for her which his mother had knit, and a book of drawings for Bill, that Mr. Milford the school-teacher had sent him.

"Can Bill Donald draw?" Nelly asked with surprise.

"Yes, and as skilfully as Mr. Milford," Tony replied. "If he could devote more time to the art, I believe he would make a proficient. All he knows about it he has taught himself, and he could not have improved as he has, if he had not a wonderful talent."

"How strange that is!" Nelly said, unable to accord to the plain ploughboy in her mother's fields, a taste for anything above hog and hominy.

"And I'd like to know why he mayn't make pictures and anything else he likes," said Amy.

"Hoity toity, puss! what do you know about Bill Donald?" Tony asked.

"I know he is good and clever, and brings me June apples and hickory-nuts when nobody else has any, and makes flutter-mills for me in the branch, and cuts baby dolls out of poplar boards, and does everything else that is good," said the child.

"Hurra for our side!" cried a fine full voice, and a youth of about seventeen leaped the worm-fence dividing a hemp-field from the wood, and lifting Amy to his shoulder, bore her off in triumph.

"She has lauded you to the tree-tops, Bill," Tony

said. "I might have said something ill-natured about you out of purest jealousy, if I had not been afraid of her claws, for I verily believe she would scratch out any one's eyes who dared speak ill of you."

"Amy knows who is her friend, doesn't she?" Bill Donald said, as he clasped her little dusty feet close in one hand, and held her securely on his broad shoulder with the other.

"And have you got a whole hat-full of guinea eggs for me?" she asked, lifting his wide-brimmed straw hat from his head.

"Yes, and a little white kitten."

"But have you got this *big* hat full of eggs? I want ever so many, because mother Donald couldn't give me any for Easter, and you know you said next time I came you would give me your hat-full, and I should dye every one of them red."

"Yes, I'll give you this big hat full, Amy, and you shall sew them all up in red flannel, and boil them till they are as red as your lips. But you don't say anything about the kitten."

"Well now, Bill," she said archly, as she ran her little fingers through his hair, "you see I've got three pet chickens; and if I take the cat, she will eat the chickens up, and then I'll want to kill her. Suppose we let mother Donald keep the cat until the chickens are grown?"

"Well, I'm willing, Amy; that is a first-rate arrangement," Bill replied, as gravely as if he were just concluding some business transaction; and Amy drew herself up with a matronly air, feeling that she had done something very womanly and important.

They passed out of the wood into a small lot planted

in timothy grass. At the further end of it a low stile led into Widow Donald's yard. The house was in the centre,—a double log cabin chinked and whitewashed, with a small shed room at the back part which Bill occupied. One of the front rooms, which the old woman called "the big room,"—it was no larger than the other, but she could not venture to call it the parlor,—was used to entertain her company, and contained a few shuck-bottomed chairs, a pair of stained poplar tables, and a neat cherry bedstead with clean home-made furniture, kept ready always for the few friends who might chance to stay with her at night, or for belated travellers. The other was her bed-room; but besides the necessary furniture, there was a reel, with a spinning-wheel, and a set of winding-blades. Two comfortable cabins in the back yard served for a kitchen and servant's room, for the old woman had a family of negroes, sprung from a girl she had raised. The mother did the kitchen work, and assisted her mistress in weaving; and the beautiful plaid linsey on the loom in the kitchen, bore ample testimony to her skill. Her children were young, the oldest being scarcely stout enough to do farm-work; but Widow Donald's farm contained only thirty acres, and with the assistance of Dinah and her children, Bill not only tended it well, but in connection with Mr. Carper, a thrifty old farmer, who lived near them, rented Mrs. Bracken's grounds, each year adding to his mother's comforts, and his own purse, besides finding time in the winter to go to school.

Few youths of his age in any station were more intelligent or better bred; and his whole demeanor revealed an innate sense of individuality at least, that without

rendering him forward or self-important, gave him a modest vivacity and ease of address doubly interesting in one whose position had always been among the humblest. For Bill Donald's family was not descended from the high-born unfortunates so often eulogized in books. They had been, as far back as the genealogical record ran, a hard-working, unpretending race, distinguished alone for integrity and kind-heartedness, and an earnest disposition to improve their temporal and spiritual condition by every honest means; and though manifesting no disposition to ape their betters, or obtrude themselves upon a sphere of life, ranked higher than their own, their quiet self-respect and intelligence won the favor of the most cultivated families in the neighborhood; and Widow Donald and her son, the last of a humble, worthy line of yeomanry, were welcomed into every house. They rarely accepted the civilities of their neighbors, however; for the old woman being very thrifty, had but little time to spend from home; and Bill, when not at labor, was busily occupied with books; and knowing besides, that the least haughty and purse-proud in "society," feel, without being aware of it, a little if only a *very* little condescension in taking by the hand one whose grade has always been inferior, his high spirit preferred to avoid the mortification such manifestations inflicted, although his good sense taught him they were wholly unintentional.

Widow Donald was sitting under a catalpa tree, reeling broaches of yarn, as the party crossed the stile. Her figure was small and delicate, but she was still active and cheerful, though age and sorrow had relentlessly assailed her. She had once a large family, but the hardships of

frontier life had taken her children from her, one by one, and now, at the age of sixty years, only her youngest born was left. Yet with that serene, trustful faith so seldom found among the worldly-wise, so common to the untutored poor, she went about her many duties with unflagging feet and patient spirit, living in the devout belief, that He who takes away our treasures, will restore them to us again with usury; and finding in the varied avocations of her household, beguilement from all sorrowful memories.

She made a pleasant, homely picture as she sat there under the wide-leaved tree, the sinking sunlight fringing with gold the hem of her dress which lay outside the shade. Her gray hair was parted smoothly from her forehead; and her high-crowned cap of white sprig muslin with a ruffled border, was tied by plain muslin strings beneath the chin. Her frock of home-made cotton striped in brown and blue, with long straight sleeves, was confined at the waist by a draw-string. A wide plaited ruffle of cambric around her throat, and a white cotton apron buttoned at the waist, completed her daily uniform. She looked up as her visitors approached, and re-adjusting her silver-rimmed spectacles, advanced to meet them.

"You have been a great stranger, Nelly," she said, after she had greeted her guests one by one, and ushered them into her parlor. "I thought you would have come oftener to see me since Miss Mabel went away."

"And so I would, mother Donald, if I had had any one to come with me. But Lina is busy, and you know mother seldom leaves home."

"I am quite sure you have often thought of me," the old woman replied. "See, the new ruffles fit as neatly.

as those Miss Mabel made me," she continued, as she smoothed the cambric around her neck. "You will soon sew as well as your sister."

"Oh no," said Nelly modestly, "I shall never do that."

"You must not think so," Widow Donald rejoined. "Never say 'I can't' do anything, except such things as should not be done; but say 'I'll try,' dear, and be sure you will nearly always succeed. I have lived a long time, and have found in almost every instance, the anticipation of any labor more perplexing than its accomplishment."

Bill had gone to his room to get some drawings he had promised to show Tony, and presently returned with a rude portfolio he had made of pasteboard, and a book of first lessons for beginners.

"I find Tony," he said, "that I have been going savagely astray in some things; so I have been trying to get back to first principles. You know I told you last fall, young Rosenberg had given me a book of lessons, and I have been studying them diligently. Here is my last attempt," he continued, taking from his portfolio a sketch of the city of Heidelberg. It was beautifully executed.

"You have a wonderful talent, Bill," Tony said. "If I were you, I would not be satisfied to stop short of the highest departments of art."

Bill Donald smiled in spite of himself. Tony had the smallest bit of a swagger—a characteristic of hobade-hoy-dom,—when smattering about learned subjects; and uttered the idioms of Amateurs with an emphatic grandiloquence absolutely interesting for its very ridiculousness.

"And die of mortification over my miserable failure," Bill replied. "Why, Tony, I can't discern one color from another, and haven't interest enough in drawing to perfect myself in that branch alone. Oh, no! I've no disposition to attempt excellence in the polite arts, because I've no capacity. I love a farmer's life; and while I shall use all diligence to cultivate my mind thoroughly, I shall avoid all pursuits having a tendency to isolate me from my fellow-beings, and incite ambitious feelings which would doubtless rankle in disappointment. All who are capable of becoming famous have an instinctive knowledge of it, and find happiness in the consciousness of their lofty gifts, even if they be to some extent without human companionship; and though there are many unfortunate ones who imagine they were born to be noted, they by no means nullify the rule. Now I have no idea that I will ever startle the world in any way, nor have I any disposition to try; my highest enjoyment being the study of useful knowledge by my mother's comfortable fireside."

The time was passing so pleasantly to all, the children were surprised to find, when Tony said they must return, that the sun was setting. Bill accompanied them, with Amy again on his shoulder holding the hat full of eggs; while all were eager to reach home, and wondering if Mabel would be there first.

"I wonder if Robert Blackburn has curly hair, and can sing?" Nelly said, half-soliloquizing, as she lazily stripped off the slender leaves of a young willow with which she had broken when they entered the wood.

"You'll know pretty soon, Nelly," Tony replied: "I shouldn't be surprised to find them at Lily Dell when

we return, and Morton and Mr. Cameron also, for Ned always said he meant to take Lina by surprise."

"I'd like to know what Mr. Morton has for Lu and Amy," Nelly said. "He wrote to Lina he had some beautiful shells for me that he bought of an old sailor who got them in the East Indies. Won't it be nice to have something that came from so far away? What do you reckon he has for you, Lu? You know he said he wouldn't tell, because you didn't kiss him when he went away."

"I know, I know!" cried Amy, before Lu had time to answer. "He'll bring her another saddle-girth."

"What does she mean, Lu?" Tony asked.

"Why, last Christmas he thought he must give us all some presents, so he went to town and bought two great broad old-fashioned belts for Nelly and me, and Amy called them saddle-girths."

"Yes," Amy said, "for they looked just like the girth to Lina's new saddle."

"Well, you needn't laugh, Miss Amy," retorted Lu, "for what was your present, pray, but a little old woman's snuff-box, full of snuff?"

Bill Donald laughed. "I wouldn't let them call me old woman, Amy, if I were you," he said.

"Pshaw, I don't care," the child replied. "I gave the snuff to Granny, and put my doll's pins in the box, so you see it's of some use. But what can they do with their belts? Wear them to church I s'pose, like old 'Cajah Leach's wife the basket-woman."

"Amy, a'n't you ashamed?" Nelly said, though her ill-suppressed titter told a different story from her rebuke;

"if Mrs. Leach has no taste it's not her fault, and you oughtn't make fun of her."

"I wasn't making fun of her. She does wear a belt, and she does sell baskets, and she is outlandish, isn't she, Bill?"

"Yes, Amy; but very good-hearted."

"Oh, yes," responded the child. "When Tom Carper's mother died, I saw her at the funeral, and she cried and seemed so sorry. But she didn't have any handkerchief, Bill, and she looked so droll and ugly rubbing her eyes with the corner of her apron, that I laughed; and how mother did scold me when I got home! I wish she wouldn't cry, don't you?"

Bill and Tony roared. "I think we'll have to give you over, Amy," Tony said. "There's no such thing as taming you."

"I hope mother won't make us go to school Monday," Lucy said. "I don't like Mr. Milford one bit. He's so cross to me, and thumps me so hard on the head when I miss my lessons, that I wouldn't study, if he kept me in all day."

"But you put him out of temper, Lu, because you won't learn," Nelly said.

"And has he any better right to get out of temper than I have? You say I oughtn't get angry, and yet you find excuses for a great grown-up man like him. Why can't he treat me like Mr. Withers did? He never cuffed me, even if I did miss, and I loved to get my lessons just to please him. But when I do know them now, and get up in class to recite, Mr. Milford will say, 'Well, how many words are you going to miss to-day?' and then I get so angry, I forget them all."

"Never mind, Lu, mother says Mabel may teach us after this quarter," Amy said, while her small black eyes flashed. "She says Nelly learns faster with Mabel than she ever did before, and so will we. I don't like Mr. Milford, neither."

CHAPTER IV.

Alas! what kind of grief should thy years know?
Thy brow and cheek are smooth as waters be,
When no breath troubles them.

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

"I LIKE him very much," Nelly thought, as she sat under one of the cherry-trees in the front yard, listening while Robert Blackburn read Tasso's Jerusalem to Mabel. There was a fulness in the tones of his voice, and an ease in his pronunciation, that interested her deeply; and when he read of the contest between Tancred and Clorinda, and the terrible grief of the murderer-lover when Clorinda lifted her glazing eyes to his face and said, "Baptize me I beseech thee," her eyes were full of tears, and she was quite sure no one could have read the heart-rending story half so well. She had never seen any but the boys in the neighborhood, and the contrast between the polished, graceful manners of the new guest, and the rough uncouth ways of her play-fellows, won her notice at once.

Yes, she was very much pleased as she listened, and she thought how different he was from anybody else! There were her cousins, rude farmer-boys, whose hands

were so coarse, and whose boots looked like scows: and Isham Neale, the blacksmith's boy, with his leathern apron and sooty face, and Tom Carper, who built the new kitchen, and Bill, in his brown homespun suit and plain cotton shirt without any ruffles or fancy-work—yes, he was so different from anybody else!

"Well, Nelly, will you remember my face, think?" he said, as he looked up from the book and found her eyes fixed upon him. The child blushed, and looked away.

Robert Blackburn's father, after amassing quite a fortune from the sale of his lands in Kentucky, removed to Louisville to engage in commercial pursuits. Mrs. Bracken had not seen any of his family for several years, and had heard but little of them until Mabel went to Louisville, in March, to visit a relation who had recently gone thither from Pennsylvania, when she renewed the acquaintance with the Blackburn family; and Robert, who was preparing to attend the Lexington University, obtained leave from his father to return with her, and make a short visit at Lily Dell before entering college. He seemed to like Nelly from the first; and it was so unusual for any one to notice her particularly, her little heart bounded with delight at the smallest attention from him, and lifted him almost to the rank of a deity in comparison with others.

"Come, Nelly," he said to her one day as he sat on the soft grass with Mabel, who was making a dress for her mother, "I'm going to read the Tempest, and you must take the character of Ariel. I saw a little girl no larger than you perform it in Cincinnati last winter, and she did it so well the audience almost frightened her with their applause."

Nelly's cheeks flushed with pleasure as she took her seat beside him, and her knitting-needles almost played a tune while she listened to his voice; and when her turn came to read, her own trembled with happiness at the thought that he could see how dearly she loved such beautiful things.

"What was Ariel, Mr. Robert?" she asked, after they had finished reading.

"Oh, I don't know," he replied carelessly. "He was a ghost, for aught I know. I never thought much about it." He turned away, and throwing himself beside Mabel's stool, began to toy with a little silver chain that confined her scissors to her side.

Nelly arose disappointed and went away. "A ghost," she thought, as she turned into the spring-path, and sat down by the currant-bushes. "I wonder if he thinks I believe in *ghosts*. And then he turned off as if I had done something very wrong, and had offended him, when I asked. I'm sure I meant no harm. But then I had no business talking to him as if I were grown, and it was good for me to be put off by him, for I know I looked just like an upstart.—I wish I could find out what Ariel was. Mabel tried to tell me, but I could not understand her exactly. I wonder if I ever will know? Lina says I had better be scrubbing than reading such things. Maybe I had. But I love to read, and I get so tired of *Rasselas*, and *Pilgrim's Progress*, and the *Vicar of Wakefield*, and such stories! Why won't Lina let me read *Spenser's Fairy Queen*? I'm sure I could understand that, the name is so pretty; and I wouldn't soil it. She says little girls oughtn't read such books. I wish somebody would write books for little girls. There isn't any-

thing in the book-case for children but *Beauty and the Beast*, and *Cinderella*, and the *Arabian Nights*, and I know them nearly all by heart. Mr. Robert said he had *Robinson Crusoe* in his trunk, and that I must not let him forget to give it to me. I'll ask him for it to-morrow. I don't know. Maybe he'll think I'm trying to be womanish, or something of that sort. I wish—"

"Why what are you doing here in the bushes, Nelly?"

She started hurriedly, as if every thought had been uttered aloud, but quickly recovered herself when she found there was no one near but Sally Van Zandt.

"I came over," Sally said, "to see cousin Mabel; but I saw that strange young gentleman with her, so I went round by the privet bushes to look for you in the kitchen, but Granny told me she saw you go down the spring-path, and I followed you. Get your bonnet, and let's go to the orchard. I've got something to tell you."

Nelly ran back to the dining-room, and lifting her sun-bonnet from a nail by the window, was soon walking briskly with her companion along the path which led past the spring to the orchard. They did not stop until they reached an old apple-tree which Nelly had claimed from babyhood, and in whose bark she had cut the initials of her name when she first learnt to form the letters. The outlines were still visible, though the incisions, which had penetrated to the wood at first, were almost even with the smooth rind now.

"It has been five years, Nelly, since you cut your name here," Sally said. "You know it was the day I was eight years old; and you were not quite seven."

"Yes," Nelly replied, "what a long time it seems! Aunt Sophie gave you a party, and you wouldn't invite any

of the boys, and uncle made fun of Tony because he was the only beau, and Tony got angry, and stole one of the biggest cakes, and ran off to the woods to eat it, with Bill Donald. You know Bill was chopping in the Mahon clearing."

Sally laughed. "I had almost forgotten it," she said. "But I remember Bee Barton took Tony's hat and put it on her head, and was stalking about, bowing and scraping to the girls and calling herself Mr. Barton, when father came in and told her she had made a mistake,—that she meant Mrs. Langford. How Bee cried! I was so sorry father said it; it was so rude to talk so to company. I'm going to the Academy next week, where Bee is at school. That's what I had to tell you."

"You are going to the Academy, Sally?" Nelly asked with surprise.

"Yes. I wish you were going too. Don't you think Aunt Viola might afford to let you go?"

Nelly shook her head. "I wish I could go to school," she said at length. Mabel says there are so many things in the Lexington Academy to illustrate the different studies; they have globes and charts in the female school, and blow-pipes and batteries in the college, and a library of all kinds of books. I would be so glad if I could go. Here at home Mabel has so much sewing to do she can't hear me recite as many lessons as I would at school, and then I have n't as much time for study, either. I don't care anything about money except when——"

She was going to say, "except when I see that I can't have opportunities for improvement," but a feeling of pride came over her, and she stopped short without finishing the sentence.

"I wish father would send you instead of me," Sally said. "I don't want to go. I don't love to study, and I think I know enough. He wants me to take music lessons, and I would as soon be flogged. I can't sing a note, and know I shall never learn. I wish he would send you, and let me stay at home."

Nelly's awakened pride got the mastery. "Oh no," she said, "you shouldn't feel so, Sally. You know Mabel has a finished education, and is as good a teacher as Miss Mowbray. I have her to teach me, and if you don't go to school you know you have n't any one."

Sally saw the unfortunate turn given the conversation by her blundering generosity, and with the tact of an older head said quickly,

"But you will let me come sometimes and take drawing lessons from you when I'm not at school, won't you, Nelly? I often think I would love to draw, but father says I shan't take lessons, and cousin Mabel has taught you so well I want to try if I can't learn too."

And then with their young arms intertwined they sauntered under the trees, talking of the projected school days, and making many promises to write to each other, until the sun sunk low behind the hills, and the deepening shadows warned them it was time to say goodbye. They returned slowly to the house, for Sally had a message from her mother to Mrs. Bracken, and their faces were as dejected as if this were the final parting, although they had promised to see each other every day until Sally's departure.

"I will go with you over the lawn, Sally," Nelly said when they reached the stile. They walked side by side in silence until they came to the gate that opened into

the road, and with a simple goodbye, for their hearts were too full to say any more, they separated in tears.

Theirs was a peculiar affection. Unlike in everything, they had been constant playmates from their infancy, sharing all things unreservedly, and preferring each other's society to that of all their associates. Sally was a careless, goodnatured hoyden, sprightly and intelligent by nature, but sadly destitute of application; and preferred a splash in the brook, a bare-back ride on her father's horse, or a swing on the grapevine by the school-house, to any book, however simple and entertaining. She was only one year Nelly's senior, but was so brave and daring, Nelly looked up to her as if she had been ten years older, and would follow wherever she led. I said they were unlike in all things. They were both warm-hearted and fun-loving; but Sally never grew tired of sport, and Nelly preferred her books to anything in the world. Sally loved angling, and would shout with glee over every additional perch or silver-side added to her string. She delighted too, to harness Bess-bugs together, and drive them for oxen, or tie a long string to the leg of a June-beetle, and let it fly as far as the thread would go, laughing immoderately at its miserable, buzzing efforts to get away; and she would hunt all day for a land-terrapin, to put a hot coal on its back, and make it thrust out its head and feet. Nelly could not engage in these cruel frolics with her, but there was a queer distinctiveness about the girl's temperament that won and enchained her interest, long before she could tell the reason why. She sometimes felt balked and fretted, when, after confiding some favorite plan or notion to her cousin, she was made to feel that Sally took no earthly interest in it;

and though she found a ready listener in Mabel, she could not help wishing for a companion of her own age, or one whose many duties would not prevent the listening to whatever she had to say, whenever she might incline to say it.

Something akin to this her thoughts were suggesting, when she shut the gate, and turned her face homeward. There was a clump of locust trees half-way down the carriage track, and she stopped beneath them to watch the fire-flies twinkling in the dim foliage.

"A penny for your thoughts, Nelly," said a voice beside her. It was Robert Blackburn's.

"You ran off and left us quite cavalierly this afternoon," he said. "Where have you been?"

"In the orchard, with Cousin Sally Van Zandt," she replied. "She came over to see Mabel, but you were with her, and she wouldn't go where you were."

"She needn't be afraid of me," he said. "I wouldn't bite her. But tell me, is she as pretty as you are, Nelly?"

Her face was sad, as she answered: "You are trifling. You know I'm not pretty, Mr. Robert; but, though I don't care for that, I don't like to be made fun of."

"I'm not making fun indeed, Nelly," he said with a smile. "I think you are beautiful. You have glorious brown eyes, and the sweetest mouth I ever saw; and you can see yourself, what lovely curls you have. Look, they glisten even in the moonlight," and he lifted the long ringlets, and tossed them over her face.

When they fell, it was lighted by a happy smile. "I wish you knew my cousin Sally," she said. "Aunt Sophie

wants us all to spend the day with her, to-morrow, and"—

"You mean she wants us to spend to-morrow with her."

Nelly's cheeks reddened, but, she acknowledged the correction, and continued, "Mother has accepted the invitation. Aunt, was taken sick, the day after you came, and has not been able to come over since, but you will not let that keep you from going, will you? Mother says, you ought to go, for your father and Uncle Van Zandt, were schoolmates in Virginia, and he said when he was here, the other day, he wanted to have a long chat with you about old times. You will see Sally there, and I know you will love her."

"But, not as well as my little friend, Nelly," he said.

"And yet I am half jealous of you."

"Of me?" she asked. "Who loves me so well?"

"Mabel," he replied. "I almost regret coming here, Nelly. I have lost all relish for College, and feel as if I could stay here forever."

"But, you will have so much time, and such fine opportunities to study," she said. "Why, in the three years you will remain in Lexington, you can make yourself such a scholar!" and she looked up in his face, to see if he really could mean what he said.

"I can't think about books," he replied. "Can you keep a secret, Nelly?"

She trembled. It was so strange to be questioned in that gloomy way, and there was something mysterious in his looks, which puzzled and half frightened her.

"You don't answer me," he said. "You don't care

about sympathizing with me. I didn't think you were cold-hearted."

"Tell me what it is," she said, as she came and stood beside him.

"I love," he said. "I love one, whose vows are plighted to another, but I believe her heart is mine. I can think of nothing else but winning her; for, without her, books and every thing besides would be hateful to me, and life itself a blank."

"But is it not wrong to wish to make her break her promise?" Nelly asked, "and to say you will not care for life even, without her? You are so blest, to have friends, and money, so that you can buy books, and go to school. I don't see how you can be so unhappy. I'm sure there are many who would be glad to love you, and you have so many pleasant enjoyments I don't see how you can feel lonely and wretched."

"You are too young to love, and therefore you can't appreciate my feelings, Nelly. I know I have money, for my wants not only, but for every whim. Still, I want more than money can buy; and the few days I have spent here have convinced me that I shall never be happy on earth, if this one desire of my heart be not gratified."

Nelly scanned his features in the dusky light. There was a gloomy shade over his face, and a strange curl in his upper lip, as if his soul exulted in its capacity, for sinking lead-like, into the deepest mire of despondency.

"Did you ever tell the lady you loved her?" she asked.

"Yes."

"What did she say?"

"She didn't answer me, but burst into tears and left me, the best proof in the world that she loves me, for why would she weep, unless she was grieving, because her hand was not free? And then I never saw any one more attentive to the comfort of another, than she is to mine, which would not be the case, if she didn't love me. I judge her by myself. I know I couldn't manifest the interest she feels in me, if my heart were not in it."

Nelly was perplexed. "Have you told Mabel about it?" she asked. "Please tell her, Mr. Robert; I know she will give you good advice, and sympathy too."

"The lady I love is your sister Mabel, Nelly."

She burst into tears. "You are strange and wicked," she said. "You know Mabel loves Mr. Cameron, and yet you want to take her from him. And you think because she cried, she loves you instead of him. Why she is two years older than you."

"No matter for that, I am more than half right," he said firmly. "I know more of the heart than you do, little Miss Nelly, and am pretty sure I could have secured your sister without a minute's trouble if I had come a few months sooner. Indeed I'm not so sure but she'll be my prize yet," he continued, seeing how his changed manner had impressed her. Then lowering his tone to a confidential whisper, most flattering always to a child, he talked of Mabel's many gentle attentions to him, until she was half convinced he was not mistaken.

"Wouldn't you be glad to have me for a brother?" he asked, as he stooped and kissed her forehead. There was a fascination in his manner which affected her strangely, and without replying, she suffered him to take her hand and lead her to the house.

He had acquired a singular power over her. He talked very little; but there was a grave self-possession in his manner toward her always, and an air of superiority that awed her, while she felt more and more like being near him. And though he would repulse her very often when she would ask questions about subjects her mind was beginning to feel an interest in, and she would resolve not to go near him any more, he would seek her out, and chide her so earnestly, she would at once conclude she had been doing wrong, and in her eager efforts to do better, trespass again, and again be punished with coldness and an ill-concealed petulance, that frightened and checked her. Thus it had been during the whole of Robert Blackburn's visit to Lily Dell. He was the first person that ever seemed to feel a particular interest in her besides Mabel. Her young associates loved her, but it was as the thoughtless and light-hearted love their fellows. She had fits of seriousness they could not understand, and if one of them came over her, while at play with her comrades, they would say she was angry, and straightway leave her. But Robert, though he never seemed disposed to analyze her thoughts, would notice her thoughtfulness kindly, and this gratified her, inasmuch as it proved he did not judge her harshly. Yet she often wondered he never talked to her. He read all the books Mabel loved, with apparent interest, and seemed always gratified when Nelly's tasks permitted her to listen; but she soon learnt, she must not question him upon any point not clear to herself, for a crusty answer invariably followed.

"I wish he were as frank as Tony," she thought as she walked beside him along the path through the fresh,

scented clover. "I want to ask him so many things, I'm sure he knows all about. But he's so grave and distant sometimes I feel afraid. I wonder if Mabel does love him? He says he won't live without her, and its dreadful for any body to grieve so. I don't believe Mr. Cameron would, and I—I reckon I should love Mr. Robert the best, if I were Mabel. I don't see how she can help it, when he's so miserable about her. He spoke so kindly, when he asked me if I wouldn't like to have him for my brother. It would be so nice to have a brother, especially one like him; for I'm sure after he had known me a long time, he would love me a heap more, and tell me anything I want to know."

Poor Nelly! She had not lived long enough to learn, that many minds are mere storehouses, not laboratories: that the most disagreeable thing to greedy book-dyspeptics, is the attempt to digest what they read, and that those who are most ravenous after the ideas of others, rarely have a thought of their own.

She had not learnt that self-complacency may be the result of something else besides a knowledge of superiority, and that a polished exterior may cover a chaotic mass of moral and intellectual crudity. She was born and bred with *workers*; workers at the loom, the distaff, the needle, the plough, the hoe, the brake; and besides these, she had sat at the feet of the busiest laborer of all, the diligent, untiring Mabel, toiling with never-failing ardor in a field uncared-for and unexplored by any of her fellows. To her, every blade of grass, every leaf and flower, and bird and cloud and star, uttered a beautiful lesson, teeming with lofty suggestions and priceless truth; and from her, Nelly had learnt the importance of

constant occupation, for the hands not only, but the head and heart. She had never been with the idle, and could not therefore imagine, but that Robert Blackburn in his long silences, was pondering some weighty matter, the results of which he would sooner or later make known.

She sat that night by the little table in Mabel's room, with Lu and Amy, and Jane the servant-girl, after the tea-table had been cleared away, and Lina and Mabel had gone with Robert to the pasture for a moonlight walk.

"He has such good manners," she said, as she took up the snuffers to trim the tallow candle. "I wish we had sperm candles, like those they burn at his father's. I don't care about any for our rooms, but I'd like to have one for the parlor, and another for his room. I felt so bad to-night, when he told Mabel, he couldn't finish the Jerusalem, because the light was so dim."

"Who he den, I like to know, what got eyes so much wuss 'an oder folks?" said Jane testily. "It's monsus perlite in him to set up, an tell 'bout his daddy's spum candles, an finery here, whar he think nobody don't know no better. Miss could burn her spum candles too, ef she'd go in debt for 'em. Wait tell pay-day cum; den you'll see what's what."

"He never sat up and boasted about his father's high living," Nelly replied angrily, "he's too well bred to do such a thing."

"How *you* know anyt'ing 'bout it den, ha?"

"Because yesterday he was placing his shirt-bosom, and said, he was afraid you didn't understand starching his shirts, as well as the girl, who washes for his father's family in Louisville. But he caught himself directly, as

if he was afraid he had been unjust to you, and said, 'Bridget always put sperm in the starch;' and when I asked him how she did it, for I had never heard of such a thing, he told me she used the ends of the sperm candles they burnt."

"His shirts don't suit him, ha! Den let him go home an' git his white nigger to shine 'em fur him," Jane retorted, while her big black eyes flashed indignantly. "I'm shore *I* doesn't consedder it no honor to wash fur no sich tripe. But you jis' wait a little, honey; God Almighty always keep one eye on sich as dat, mine I tell you. Dat boy gwine see de day he wish he had a shirt to put starch in, you see."

"What do you mean, Jane?" Nelly asked.

"Oh you likes him sich a wonderful much, I 'feared o' hurtin' your feelins," Jane replied scornfully.

"Do tell us Jane," Lu and Amy both asked, rubbing their eyes to keep off sleep until they could hear what the girl had to say; for though she refused and parleyed always, she never kept back anything she knew.

"Well you see," she began, in a very confidential tone, "I was in de cuppen milkin', jis 'bout sunrise dis mornin', an' Sam Fairfax—I should say, Sam Washinton, however, kase you know his granddaddy's oldest brudder's son, was body-sarvant to Ginerol Washinton,—well Sam he cum 'long wid a tater punkin, he promised to fetch me last week, dat he bin save fum winter, an' he say, 'Look here, Jane Amandy,' he say, 'who dat young Massa cum fum de Hio riber, wid Miss Mabel?'"

"How you reckon *I* know?" I say, sorter mad like, kase you know I didn't want to seem like I was too well pleased wid Sam no how," and she tossed her head co-

quettishly, and crossed her broad naked feet. "'Well anyhow,' Sam say, 'I know he de son ob ole Man Blackburn, what use to go to school wid Master in his young days; an' now I gwine tell you,' he say, 'I was comin by de cornfiel' istiddy, an' I hear Mast. Bill Donnel tellin' Mas' Carper, he hope Miss Mabel wan't gwine to sep dat young man's dresses, kase his daddy wan't wuff a cent, ef his debts was paid.' Dat's zackly what Sam Washinton tole me, and he a'n't no liar."

"How does Bill Donald know anything about Mr. Robert?" Nelly asked.

"Well you see, chile," Jane continued, "Mast. Bill he go to de Hio falls in de winter, wid his farm truck, an' he trades wid all de folks he knows. An' den ole Miss Arnett his aunt lib da too, an' she know all 'bout dem highflyers."

Nelly felt perplexed. She knew Bill Donald always spoke the truth, and these revelations grieved her no little.

"I'm so sorry," she said. "But I like Mr. Robert more than ever since you have told me, and I don't see why his poverty should make Bill Donald say he hopes Mabel won't marry him. I'm sure I should marry him, if I were in her place, that is if I loved him, even if he didn't have any money nor any home."

"Oh yes, it's dreadful gran' talkin' 'bout gittin' married, wid no home, an' no money, and no nothin', sep' a heap o' true lub, but dat a'n't gwine gib you no hog an' hominy, mine what I say. You got to grub for tater, shore as you born. An' what dat boy gwine do wid wife? He git Miss Mabel, he got no place to put her in, no vittles to feed her, what he gwine do to git 'em? Settin' in de corner nussin' his shiny boots won't do it, I know."

Why I would n't do de likes ob dat mysef, Miss Nelly. Here I is, got a good home, plenty to eat, plenty cloze, nice bed and blankets to sleep on by mis's warm fire in de winter, an' ef I wus to take de meanest nigger in Kaintucky he couldn't take me from my home an' my mistis. I got somebody to nuss me, too, when I sick; an' ef any nigger wus to 'buse me, mis's would mighty quick show him de way off de place. But fur all dat, you don't ketch dis chile takin' no Sam Washinton 'dout he work Sat'day ebenins and hol'days and long winter nights, to git nice poplar bedstid and Sunday coat for Jane Amandy Bracken, you hear it. But poor young miss! she ha' to go 'way off wid her man, de Lord knows whar, and den ef he 'buse her an' starve her an' all dat, who gwine to len' her helpin' han'? Who gwine to buy her fizick, or nuss her and wait on her? I tell you what, white gal better look out 'fore she go wid a man what ax her to lib wid him when he got nuthin' to gib her, kase he mighty ap' to 'buse her 'fore he done wid her. Man treat cheap wife like cheap hat; did n't cos' much, don't keer much 'bout it. Let him show her he can work fur her fust; an' ef he a'n't willin' to do dat, let him go sail-in'. Sam, he want me to tell him 'yes,' Crismus, but I ax him what he hab to gib wife? and den when he say he didn't want me jis den, but would I say yes when he git money nuff to buy churry bedstid and nice rag carpet for de cabin by the orchit, den I tell him dat's quite anoder how-d'ye-do."

"But I know Mr. Robert would work to support his wife, and be good and patient and watchful if she were sick, and do everything to make her happy. I know him better than you do," Nelly said.

"How cum dat?" Jane asked. "I s'pose you wus cleanin' his room dis mornin', and seed him cum in an' pull off his pinchin' boot, an' grit his teeth, and kick it clean 'cross de room? Dat was patient, wusn't it?"

Jane continued to talk until Lu and Amy fell asleep at her knee, and Nelly's head was full of confused ideas about the subject she had been discussing, and the revelations she had made. Before Lina and Mabel returned from their walk, however, she went below stairs, and Nelly was left alone. The moon was at the full, and shed a magic influence over the sloping hills and smooth swelling meadows that lay westward toward the towering cliffs along the Elkhorn. Nelly blew out the candle, and seating herself by one of the gable windows, drew aside the cambric curtain, and watched the moonlight dapple with silver the long blue grass under the locust trees, as its beams fell broken through the feathery, trembling foliage. The past ten days had been like years to her. Thoughts had been aroused in her mind which she could neither comprehend nor cast aside, and a vague, shapeless dread, the origin of which she could not reach, appalled her by its very indistinctness. Robert Blackburn had confided a secret to her, too, and though she had not openly promised silence, he had said enough to convince her he would be forever angry if it escaped her lips. She had never kept a single thought from Mabel, and now she was in possession of something she would shudder to communicate to her, even if he had not asked her to keep it secret. It was terrible, she thought, for him to love Mabel as he did, knowing she was bound to another; and yet she wished her sister were free, so she might love him in return. Perhaps Mr. Cameron would

die, and then Mabel could marry him, and he would never go away; and she felt so glad, till Jane's story recurred to her. How would he have so much money, if his father really owed such large amounts as Bill Donald said? She knew it was a great sin, to withhold the rights of others, and wondered how he could spend money so freely as he did, for cigars and fishing tackle and ammunition, and other unnecessary things, besides dressing in such costly clothing. Maybe he didn't know his father was not wealthy? She was sure he didn't, and a smile came over her face again. Poor Mr. Robert! he was so mild and generous too, she couldn't bear to think he would ever be unfortunate. Mild? She remembered what Jane had said about the boots, and the shade came back to her features. Could he indeed be so high-tempered? Something serious must have happened to make him angry before he went back to his room. But he was generous, for she had seen him give money to Granny and Uncle Jake, two or three times; and she had often heard him say there was nothing so pleasant as alms-giving, especially in secret; and how could he know, if he had not experienced it? Then she remembered the amount she had heard him say he expended for cigars in one year, a sum large enough to pay her tuition at the Academy. Had he ever thought of it? And then pride came up and taunted her for being willing, even in a passing thought, to receive *charity*. Her face crimsoned with shame. Yet, she meditated, I am wicked and covetous, and he was right the other day when he told me I oughtn't be so anxious to learn, for I would make myself unhappy and sinful. He said too, God orders everything for the best, and I should be very

thankful even for the blessings I have. I am thankful, very, I believe; but I can't help wondering if God has ordered that I shall never have the advantages of others, when I do believe I could improve them. The child had begun to think.

It was quite late when she heard the voices of Lina and Mabel, in low conversation, near the back windows of the parlor. She listened, but could not hear Robert, and was trying to conjecture why he had left them, when she was interrupted by the sound of their footsteps on the stairs. As the room on the porch, which Lina had occupied after her marriage, had to be given to Robert Blackburn during his stay, she had since slept with Mrs. Bracken in the upper back-room which communicated with the stairs, and Mabel occupied the other with the children. The sisters separated at the door, and Mabel entered her chamber, but did not discern Nelly's little white figure by the window, for the curtain half-shrouded her, and her night-dress looked like but another of its folds. She lighted the candle, and after disrobing herself, sat down by the low walnut table, and opening her Bible, proceeded to read her evening lesson, when a voice as if from the clover lawn, and apparently a man's, attracted her attention. She closed the book and listened. The tones grew louder, and by the occasional appeals to the Deity, she knew the person, whoever he might be, was engaged in prayer.

She went to the window on the other side of the fireplace from the one where Nelly sat, and drew aside the curtain. The moon still shone brightly, and she distinctly saw the figure of Robert Blackburn under an old apple-tree outside the yard fence. He was kneeling with

his face toward the window, offering up in a loud tone, an incoherent prayer. He implored that she might be happy with the one she had chosen, that no thorn might ever spring up in her pathway, that the memory of his grief might never sadden her reflections, and peace and joy be her portion forever. And then in a wild, tremulous voice, he begged for strength to bear his sorrow, for courage to look life in the face with a steady spirit, and above all, to be saved from the temptation that constantly beset him, the sin of self-destruction. Nelly sobbed aloud, and creeping slowly to the window where Mabel stood, clutched at her sister's dress. "Go to him, Mabel," she whispered through her sobs, "don't let him kill himself; please go."

"It is late for you to be up, Nelly; I thought you had gone to bed long ago," Mabel replied almost sternly, as she disengaged Nelly's hands and went with her to the bed-side.

"Have you said your prayers?" she asked, as the child paused.

"I have, Mabel."

"Then get in bed," she said. "It is quite late, and you will want to sleep in the morning, if you remain up any longer." Nelly looked at her enquiringly, but felt afraid to speak, there was something so cold in her sister's manner, so different from anything she had ever seen in her before. She crept to the back part of the bed, and covering her face with the sheet, lay awake long after Mabel had taken her place beside her, and her quiet breathing had given token of a sweet untroubled sleep.

She listened for Robert's voice, and half rose in the

bed, more than once, to go to the window again, but hesitated, knowing it would displease Mabel if she were awake. Why should it though? she thought, and why had Mabel seemed so indifferent to his trouble? How could she sleep so tranquilly, when he was out in the dew, and so unhappy too? She held her breath to listen again, but started as a huge gray owl flew hooting past the open window, and crouching nearer to her sister as if for protection, she laid her head close by Mabel's, on the same pillow, and fell asleep.

CHAPTER V.

No searching eye can pierce the veil
That o'er my hoarded love is thrown,
No outward sign unfold the tale
But to my full heart known:
Thus like the spark whose vivid light
In the dark flint is hid from sight,
It dwells immured, alone.

CAMOENS.

At an early hour next morning, all things were in readiness, for the anticipated visit to Mr. Van Zandt's. Breakfast was over by sunrise, for in those primitive days an invitation to "spend the day" meant what the words imply, and the guests were expected to arrive in the pleasant cool of the morning. Before the coffee was served, Uncle Jake was at the stile with the cariole, a vehicle Roger Bracken had purchased, some years before his death, to use in the long hunting excursions he often took with his friends, in his affluent days. It

was the only conveyance left his family, after the sale of their property, and was used not only as a market-wagon, but for visiting and church-going likewise. The old negro, in his coarse brown suit, dyed with walnut hulls by Granny, and a leghorn hat, the last gift of his dead master, which he kept for high occasions, and prized as much as if it had been a crown, sat on the front seat, complacent and stately, as any liveried lacquey in powdered wig and silken small-clothes, waiting for his mistresses and their guest, whom he would have the honor of waiting upon through the day.

The distance to Mr. Van Zandt's residence, by the road, was rather more than two miles; but a more direct route lay through the fields, and Nelly and her little sisters who had obtained permission to pursue it, rather than crowd into the wagon, were already half-way to the gate leading to the country road. On one side, lay Mrs. Bracken's fields, planted in corn and hemp, and on the other, a belt of heavy timber followed the road for half a mile, where it was cut short by a clearing of about five acres. It was called a clearing,—though but few of the trees had been cut away,—and a large log house with a rude porch in front, stood in the centre. This was the schoolhouse, the only one Nelly ever entered as a scholar, and which she left three months before, being too large a girl, her mother said, to attend a mixed school. In the corner of the lot nearest the wood, grew a clump of sycamores, from the midst of which, gushed up a large, never-failing spring, the Elim of the neighborhood, for in summer when all the streams in the pasture lands of the poor were dry, they drove their cattle thither for watering. Its waters burst up through a bed of shelving

stones and ran off into a swift clear brook, that crossed the road, and winding through the lower end of Mrs. Bracken's field, passed out across a quiet green lane, and babbling along past meadow and thicket, found its way to the Silverhorn near the spot where Nelly was thrown from her horse. The lane just mentioned, opened from the road, opposite the school-house lot, and made communication between the main highway, and the back part of Mr. Van Zandt's farm, which extended to the White Eagle Church. In many places, it was too rough for any vehicles, except the heavy carts, used for hauling hemp and corn; but it led to an old Indian trail, where flint arrow-heads and other aboriginal relics were frequently found; and Nelly always chose that route to her Uncle's, in preference to the ride along the open road.

There could scarcely be found a lovelier spot than that school-house lot. The school-boys had cleared away all the undergrowth, save here and there a clump of spice bushes and papaws, and an occasional young cedar that looked timid and lonely, like a child that had strayed from home, for there were few of its kind away from the creeks and rivers. Along the borders of the spring brook, white and blue violets, with the speckled lady's-slipper and spreading rock-moss, wrought a most exquisite embroidery; and near the road, where the water widened into a kind of pebbly marsh, a luxuriant bed of grass-nuts grew in the shade of a bending tulip-tree. There had once been a profusion of grape-vines running over the sycamores, but the school-boys had lopped them all down, except one large vine just above the spring. This they cut near the root, and boring a hole a few inches from the end, inserted a stick two feet long mid-way

through the vine, thus making a fine foothold for a swing. A wide wagon-gate, swung between an oak and a mulberry tree, opened into the road just above the brook.

Nelly and her sisters walked briskly along, until they reached the mulberry tree, when Lu and Amy stopped to see if its berries were not beginning to ripen. Nelly laughed at them with a very motherly air, and seemed much amused that they should have forgotten when mulberries get ripe; but finding they did not relish her womanliness, she sat down on a stone, and began to tell them the legend of the tree. They seemed much interested, for she related it as nearly as possible in Mabel's own language, but when she said "and the fruit of the tree, which had always been white before, purpled with horror at the bloody deaths of the unhappy lovers"—

"I don't believe a word of it," said Lu. "I've tasted blood. It tastes salty; and mulberries taste—good" she continued, smacking her lips, "I wish I had some now, don't you Amy?"

"Yes, but it's a mighty pretty story," Amy replied. "I mean to name my kitten Thisbe, when I bring it home from mother Donald's."

"Of course it's all a fable about the mulberries changing color," Nelly said, "but I'm sure the rest of the story is true, because you know, Lu, it's so natural for lions to go all about those warm countries; and then I've heard of people who killed themselves when they were in trouble. But it's dreadful," she continued with a shudder. She remembered the events of the past night, and an uneasy sensation came over her as she arose from her seat, and looked askant at the thick undergrowth in the wood.

"Let's go look for wild strawberries, Nelly," Lu said. "There's a big bed by the blackberry thicket over there in the wood," and she started to climb the fence.

"Oh no," Nelly entreated, "they are not half ripe yet. Granny told me so yesterday. She saw them when she was coming from church Sunday. But s'pose we go inside the school-lot. It will be so nice to get a drink at the spring, and swing on the grape-vines."

Nothing could have tempted Nelly into that wood then, though she had gone through its thickest brakes many a time without fear. She had read exciting stories of attacks and escapes from wild beasts, of stealthy murderers lying in ambush for defenceless travellers, and tragic narratives of madness and suicide; and though they had perhaps colored her imagination, the purity of Mabel's teachings had so influenced her, such reading had never awakened a fear, nor any other feeling except an interest in history and a sympathy for suffering. But now she had heard words she had only *read* hitherto, as coming from the lips of beings so far removed both by time and place, they seemed almost of a different race from herself; and with a child's quick fancy, undisciplined by experience, and yet uncontrollable by reason, she looked in every thicket for the fiery eyes of a savage beast, or the dead body of some murdered victim. It was with a feeling of relief then that she saw Lu and Amy with willing assent open the gate leading into the school-grounds, for they were pleasant and shady, and Bill Donald and old man Carper, who were ploughing the young corn in the field opposite, came every little while to that part of the land nearest the road; and even when on the other side were still in sight, and seemed like a protection.

They went to the spring. Lu and Amy had not been there since Mabel's return, for Mr. Milford's session closed a few days after, and Mrs. Bracken yielded to their entreaties to be allowed to stay at home, and be taught by Mabel.

"I thought I never would put my foot back here," Lu said, "when mother told us Mabel might teach us at home, but I believe I'd like to go to school again right well. Wasn't it fine, Amy, to have the boys turn the rope while we girls chased the fox? I always liked to be the fox, because I could run faster than any girl in school."

"Yes," Amy said, "but you wouldn't let us little girls jump with you. We didn't care though. We could play Thimble, and Hunt-the-slipper, and Poor-puss-wants-a-corner, and ever so many other pretty plays."

They were stooping over the spring, scooping the cool water in their hands, and drinking with much greater relish than if it had been held in a golden goblet. Nelly caught at a sycamore bough, and plucking a large leaf, folded it quaintly in the shape of a horn, and dipped it in the spring.

"See, children, what a nice cup I have made," she said, as she held it up and poured its limpid contents slowly over a moss-grown rock that jutted above the head of the spring.

"Children!" said Lucy, in an indignant tone; "I s'pose you think you're a great lady since Robert Blackburn said you would soon be in your teens."

"Oh yes," joined in Amy, "she has been putting on airs ever since Isham Neale sent her a peck of Milam apples, and wrote her that love-letter last March;" and she quoted a long rigmarole from a letter the blacksmith's

boy had sent Nelly by Uncle Jake, in which he said if they never met on earth they would meet in heaven.

"I wish you would let me alone," Nelly said pettishly, and walked off toward the swing, while Lu and Amy, their spleen vented, untied their shoes—they wore no stockings—and plunged half-way up to their knees in the brook.

"They have routed you again, Gipsy!" Nelly was swinging lazily on the grape-vine, her feet standing firmly on the cross-stick, and her head with its swaying curls resting on her hands, which were clasped tight around the strong rough stem. The sound of a familiar voice made her look up, and springing from her foothold, she put up her mouth for Tony Langford to kiss. He had just cleared the fence dividing the school-lot from the wood.

"They are a pair of little vixens, Nelly," he said, "and I shouldn't mind them if I were you. See, they have forgotten Isham ever folded a note or struck an anvil;" and his eyes sparkled as he watched them plashing in the shining water, until at last they reached the bed of grass-nuts, and began to pull them up.

"I've got the biggest bunch," said Lu, holding up a tuft of roots, from whose delicate fibres the luscious bulbs hung temptingly. "I mean to give these to Nelly."

"Please Lu, let me have that bunch to give her. You know you are the strongest, and can pull up the big ones so much better than I can," Amy said coaxingly.

"Well," Lu answered; "but don't you eat 'em. I mean to go lower down where I can get a heap of nice bunches. We can wash 'em in the water right here where it is deep, and pick out all the little ones to eat ourselves,

and save the big ones for Nelly. But I mustn't forget to take some to cousin Tony," she continued, as she gathered up her dress, and waded a few paces farther down the stream, to a smaller but more luxuriant bed of grass growing about the roots of an old hawthorn. Amy followed her, and Tony and Nelly, who had heard them without being observed, turned away with a smile, and sat down by the spring.

"I started out before breakfast," Tony said, "to get some partridges in the wood. Mother took a fancy to have a partridge-pie for dinner, and it is so seldom she has a whim I thought I must gratify her. I hadn't gone half across the wood, however, before Sancho started a flock, and one shot brought down all I have in my game-bag. I have been busy ever since, setting a rabbit snare for Lucy. I promised her a young rabbit last spring, and a few weeks ago she scolded me for not getting it. But she has grown so chicken-hearted lately, I dare say she'll let it go after she gets it. Did she tell you about her squirrel-shot the day we all went to Widow Donald's?"

"No," Nelly replied; "did she shoot?"

"Yes, she not only shot, but brought the squirrel down, and then had to cry about it," he said; "and when I laughed at her she cried the harder, and said I was mean for teaching her to shoot, and a great many other hard things. But I believe I would rather see her as she is, than too boyish," and he looked again toward the spot whither she and Amy had gone. She was busy washing a handful of roots. "The boys at school used to say she was cross," he continued. "You know she played marbles with us, and always picked the biggest white-alley to shoot our knuckles whenever she won the

game. But I knew she did it out of mischief instead of spite, as they thought. Those were pleasant days, weren't they, Nelly? When you used to sit on this same stone and sing Bonnie Doun for Jim Ragland, while the rest of us played at some game, or made faces at you sweethearts. You promised to tell me one day or other what made you fall out with Jim, Nelly. Suppose you do so now."

"Well," she said, "you know the boys used to go to old Mr. Wiley's orchard every fine day, at big play time, to steal apples; and Jim would always bring me a red Milam, with my name marked on it with a pin. One day when we heard the boys coming, we girls ran to meet them, and I held out my hand to Jim for my apple, but he walked right past me, and gave it to Bee Barton. I never felt so mean in my life; and then the whole school saw him, and the boys raised a shout, as if they thought he had done something very smart." Her face reddened at the remembrance.

"What did Bee say?" Tony asked.

"She looked pleased, for you know Jim was the handsomest boy in school. But she and I had always been good friends, and so when we got back to the school-house she called me out under one of the papaw trees,—it was that one there by the elm tree,—and offered me half the apple, but somehow I couldn't take it. I didn't feel angry with her, but she thought I was, and she cried, and then I cried too, for I loved her dearly."

"What did Bee do with the apple?"

"She threw it away, and said she wished Jim Ragland would go somewhere else to school."

"And you and she were as good friends as ever?"

"Oh yes."

"Did you ever say anything to Jim about it?"

"Well, let me tell you. Two or three days after that it rained, and you know whenever it rained Lina used to come to the school-house for us, on Daisy. She always took Amy in her lap and Lu behind her, and I had to wait until she would come back. Well, that afternoon Jim ran home in the rain, and came back presently on his uncle's horse. He rode up to the stile, and told me to get up behind him, and he would take me home. I told him no, I would rather wait for Lina. He got off his horse then, and came to the porch, and said he was very sorry he gave the apple to Bee; that he only did it to see what I would do; and then he asked me to forgive him. I told him I was not angry with him, but I didn't want to ride behind him home. Then he asked me to sing, but I said I would rather not, and he got on his horse and went away. I was very sorry, but I couldn't feel like talking or singing to him any more. That was last fall. You know he went to Cincinnati soon after to learn the printing business, and died of typhus fever. When Bee Barton told me he was dead, I felt very bad; but I was n't half so sorry, I know, as I would have been if he had n't treated me so. I never could like him after that. Sally saw him give the apple to Bee, and told me it was good for me; that I always sung for him, or did anything else he asked me, until he thought he could treat me as he pleased; and that any other boy would do the same. I don't believe that. Do you?"

"No, I don't," Tony replied with emphasis. "But come, Gipsy, you're growing sad, or sour, or something else. Come, get on your high horse again, and let me

swing you as I used to do when x plus y , divided by ever so much else, had like to have left your humble servant minus the few brains he manages to keep from the weather under this new-fashioned umbrella," and he lifted from his head a broad-brimmed rye-straw hat, good old Widow Donald braided, and bowed to her with mock humility.

"It's growing late," she said, "and mother will be uneasy if we stay much longer. And then I want to get a long lesson in astronomy to-day."

"You have been playing truant lately," he said, "and if you don't take care Sally will leave you behind. Why haven't you been over? You haven't said a lesson for two weeks."

"Mother has been very busy," she replied, "and I have had to help slaie the cloth, and look after the wool-picking. But I'll try to learn enough to-day to make up for lost time. I wish Mabel had a map and globes. Then I could learn at home."

"When Sally goes to school you shall have mine," Tony replied. "But I can't teach you to-day, Nelly, because I have to play the agreeable to Robert Blackburn; and indeed I fear I have given you your last lesson, for I shall be very busy attending to the mules I have raised, and buying more, so that I may be ready to start to Carolina by the middle of September."

"Are you going away sure enough?"

"Yes. Father says I have been to school as long as there's any use, and that I must turn my attention to business now. I would much rather go to college till I'm twenty-one, and mother is very desirous for me to do so; but father thinks the four years I would spend

there can be much better employed, and the little I inherited may be doubled in that time. So I have determined to do as he wishes, though I can't exactly agree with him. After I am twenty-one I can do as I please. I have a bachelor uncle living near Charleston, who has travelled over almost every acre of land in the South, from the Mississippi to the Atlantic. Father says I may purchase lands somewhere down there with my money, if Uncle Tony thinks it advisable, and while they are improving in value, I can be in some business that will pay me a living, and give me time to improve myself too. Then, he says, by the time I am old enough either to give a title to my land, or undertake to make a plantation of it, I will have some knowledge of business, and some little experience."

"But you are not going away to stay?"

"Oh no. I will come back next spring, and every summer, indeed, to see mother and the rest of you. But I mean to live in the South. I have always fancied I should like it. It is too cold here; and then I have heard old man Carper tell so much about our southern country, I have always wanted to go there. Tom was born in Louisiana, and lived there till he was eight years old. You know his mother was a native of Louisiana."

"No," Nelly said, "I never knew it before; I never even knew that Tom was born there. Did he ever see a flamingo? I do wish he would come to our house sometimes, so I could ask him all about it. Can't you bring him, Tony?"

Tony smiled. "I reckon not," he replied. "Tom Carper runs from a woman as you would from a garter-snake, and I don't think he could be induced to go visit-

ing in any house except Widow Donald's, and old Mrs. Arnett's, at Louisville. He is a good fellow, honest and straightforward and sensible, and brave as a lion; but he is as shy of notice as a squirrel, and would be tempted to drown himself, I venture, if anybody were to say malicious things about him. His mother died when he was only ten years old, and having had no one to take care of him, he knows he's awkward and ungainly, and seems, as he grows older, to shun still more the society of all except his few connexions. But we must go," he broke off abruptly, "for the road beyond the lane, until we reach the Shawnee trail, is not shaded after nine o'clock, and we ought to hurry on."

He threw his gun over his shoulder, and calling Lu and Amy, who had hid in a corner of the fence under a clump of elder bushes, and were whistling like partridges, "to fool Bill Donald," as they said, he led the way through the gate, and in a few minutes they were crossing the brook again, where it passed the lane with fleet jeweled feet on its way through the rye-fields beyond.

The rest of the visitors had arrived at Mr. Van Zandt's residence some time before our pedestrians, and Robert Blackburn was standing with Sally on the long gallery in front of the house, looking at a rose-tree near the walk from the house to the garden-gate. It was very large, and covered with half-blown roses deepening at the heart to a golden tinge, and charged with the fine old damask fragrance.

"That is a beautiful tree," he said to his companion, as Tony stepped on the porch, unseen by either Sally or the speaker. Lu and Amy had gone with Nelly round the house, in search of their aunt.

"'Tis very pretty," Sally said timidly, as if afraid to trust her voice in the presence of such a stranger.

"Can you tell me who planted it?" he asked. "It looks very old, though still vigorous."

"My mother," Sally replied, "on her wedding-day, eighteen years ago. She planted the lilac and the privet there by the garden-wall, too, and all these cherry trees."

"Indeed!" he exclaimed, "why she must have been a lady of taste."

Tony Langford bit his lip, but advanced to salute him. There was less of cordiality in his manner than when he called to see him a few days after his arrival at Lily Dell; but he welcomed him with politeness and a degree of dignity that made Robert Blackburn feel he was in the presence of an equal at least. After a very brief conversation, Tony excused himself to put away his hunting accoutrements, and went round to a low shed at the rear of the house, where his mother sat with Lu and Amy, who were talking glibly to her, while she dressed some new-made butter just lifted from a cedar churn at her side.

"I don't like that fellow, mother," he said bluntly; "he's an upstart."

"Why cousin Tony!" Nelly exclaimed, with a look of surprise and chagrin.

"Nelly has just been telling me how intelligent and refined he is," said Mrs. Van Zandt, smiling. "I have seen but little of him since he came this morning, and have given him over to your father and sister, until I can finish some little outside duties. But you shouldn't call him an upstart, Tony, for you have seen nothing of him

as yet. Take your cousins into the drawing-room, and see if you can't find something to admire in Mr. Blackburn. It is certainly more praiseworthy to seek for virtues than for defects of character, besides being a great deal more pleasant; and in nearly all cases, we will be well rewarded for the search."

Tony and Nelly went in the house, but Lu and Amy could not be persuaded to leave aunt Sophie. Mabel was sitting by the front window with Lina and her mother, busily engaged in sewing, while Mr. Van Zandt kept Robert Blackburn equally active answering his many questions.

"So you're on your way to College?" he asked, as Tony and Nelly entered the room. Robert signified that he was.

"Well now you see, sir, I think that's all stuff," said Mr. Van Zandt. "I've got along in the world about as well as any body. I've made a comfortable home for my family, and I believe I have about as many friends as usually fall to the lot of one individual; and yet all the schooling I ever had was received from an old Scotchman, whose whole course comprised an elementary Arithmetic and Geography, and Dilworth's spelling-book. I went four months, and graduated at Crucifix in the spelling-book; but your father finished the entire course," he continued with savage pleasure, as he saw Robert Blackburn wince; "and I see he means for his children to follow in his footsteps."

"Just as your's have done, father," kindly interposed Tony Langford.

"Well, yes," Mr. Van Zandt good-naturedly replied. "I've given my boys a good foundation for an education

in sterling studies, like the solid limestone basis of this noble State of ours; and if they choose, they are at liberty to build thereon whatever foreign superstructure they please, whether it be Latin or Greek, or Gothic, like the new frame church your aunt Viola considers so vastly genteel. For my part, I liked the old log school-house best; and thought it answered every purpose."

"And I'm sure I went thither as gladly as I go to the new church," said Mrs. Bracken, glad to see the shafts of her brother-in-law diverted from her young friend to herself. "But the school-house was not central enough, and the church has cost the community very little, for Mr. Moore furnished the lumber from his own saw-mill; Col. Ward paid for the building; and the young architect who planned it would receive nothing for his superintendence, though he stayed with the workmen all the time until the building was completed, and very often aided them with his own hands."

"But what's the use of those long slab-sided windows with a peaked cock-loft for spiders at the top; and that jingling harpsichord to make music for you? Why couldn't you do your own singing, and give the money you paid for that thing, to your poor neighbors?"

"I might just as well ask you why you have this soft Scotch carpet on your floor, when one made of rags would have served the same purpose; or these rush-seat chairs, when raw hide or shuck-bottom would do as well, and not remove you so far above your neighbors," she replied. "There are no destitute among us,—there is not one who would receive anything offered as alms; for though there are many poor in our midst, they are industrious and able-bodied, and would feel insulted

at the offer of money they had not earned. As to the windows of the church, it was quite as easy for the architect to point the mullions, as to make them square; and Tom Carper, who learnt his trade in Cincinnati, found no difficulty in building them. The harpsichord is an old one, and was given to us by the Cincinnati church, the only cost to us being its transportation; and as to instrumental music, the Holy Scriptures certainly abound with confirmations of its acceptability. All who have come under its influence, as far as my observation extends, express themselves benefited by it; and those who were most devout before, say it gives them an inspiration to sing they never felt without it. Take the most ignorant among us,—those who have never heard an argument for or against it,—and let them hear the *Te Deum* once as Mabel plays it, accompanied by the girls, and dear Edward and Mr. Cameron, and you will not find one of them unimpressed by its solemn and soul-elevating beauty. Why even old Mrs. Leach, when she came with her baskets the other day, said she did wish Miss Mabel would come back, for that music made her feel like she was in heaven."

"Well, well, it's of no use to argue with women," he said, "they will have the last word. But who planned the new-fangled church?"

"A young Bavarian named Rosenberg. He was on his way to Arkansas last June, when he was attacked with intermittent fever, and being in the neighborhood of Mr. Moore's, was taken to his house, and nursed during a long illness. When recovering, he heard them one day speak of our need of a church, and offered his services as architect. The building was commenced in

August, and he determined to remain until it was finished. At that time, however, winter was approaching, and Mrs. Moore, who had learnt to love him almost as her son, persuaded him to defer going until spring. He consented; but not willing to be idle, opened a school, and stayed until a few weeks ago. Mrs. Moore and her son told me all about him a few Sabbaths ago at church. They say they have never seen a young person with such attainments, and such unpretending manners. He came West in hopes of getting a professorship in Transylvania College, but all the chairs were filled before his arrival; so he concluded to gratify a fancy he has for finding out the habits of our Indians, and has gone to Arkansas."

"Hang these foreigners!" said Mr. Van Zandt, snappishly. "I don't see why we can't admire American blood and American genius as well as theirs."

"And pray," responded Mrs. Bracken, "where would American blood and American genius be, without these foreigners? Your great-grandfather and mine were foreigners; the first hymn of a free people was sung by foreigners on Plymouth Rock; and the noblest aid given the first blow for Freedom was offered by French and Polish hands. Every foreigner who swears allegiance to our flag is no more a stranger, but a brother, unknown to us, perhaps, yet not an alien surely, for we have one common mother, Liberty. I feel proud and thankful that I was born on American soil; but I should be loth to vaunt myself therefore, or entertain the idea that our higher classes are as thoroughly cultivated as the same grades in Europe, who have the advantage of long-established literary institutions and a society wherein

there is no possible occasion for them to grow up rude and boorish. As a whole, the American people of course rank higher than any other, and an American has just completed the greatest invention of almost any age; but all this does not hinder me from giving 'honor to whom honor is due.' I will even go farther, and say I admire a naturalized citizen more than one native-born. The latter is necessarily what he is, and deserves no praise save in so far as he stands by his country's flag. But we all know how strong are the ties of home, how dear the associations of early life; and deep-rooted indeed must be the love of liberty in the hearts of those who not only expatriate themselves, but leave everything except the memory of home, for an unknown land and an unknown tongue."

"You plead well, aunt Viola," Tony said, "and I most willingly concur with you in your admiration of foreign talent. But I can't admit that any foreigner loves America as well as her own sons," and his fine face kindled with enthusiasm. "I could just as easily believe a child might love a step-mother as well as her own offspring, and you will not contend for that, I know; for though Sally and the boys esteem my mother tenderly, they don't love her half so dearly as I, do they mother?" And he turned to Mrs. Van Zandt, who had entered the room at the beginning of the conversation, and sat down beside him.

"You are very boastful, my son," she replied, "both to your country and your mother. We must wait and see if you prove yourself true to the love you profess. What do you think of the question they have been discussing, Mr. Blackburn?" she said, addressing her guest.

"I have never studied the subject sufficiently to form an opinion, I believe," he replied; and as if by consent of all parties, the conversation dropped. Nelly sat near him, looking at him curiously. "I wonder why he has never come to any conclusion?" she thought. "I know what I think about it. But he'll tell after a while, for I can see he's thinking now;" and she waited and listened, but the morning passed and he still sat almost without speaking, and apparently ill at ease.

About one o'clock dinner was announced by a thick-lipped negro girl, who opened the door into the dining-room. The table was covered by a fine linen cloth made of flax, grown, spun, and woven on the farm, and held every delicacy a Kentucky plantation yields. Everything was arranged in the best taste, and Nelly, who sat opposite Robert Blackburn, was looking to see if he appreciated her uncle's bounty and her aunt's housewifery, when Katy the maid, in offering a plate of soup to Mabel, stumbled and spilt the whole of it on her lap.

"Miss Katherine Sophrony Matildy Angeliny Cuffée," said Mr. Van Zandt, in two crescendi and a climacteric, "shall I hand you a glass of water to restore your nerves?" and springing toward her with all the alacrity of a well-trained serving-man, he offered her his glass. The girl drank off the water at a gulp, and blundered toward the sideboard to deposit the tumbler; but he took it from her with an air of extreme suavity, and placed it on one of the side-tables. Then turning to her politely, he said:

"Miss Katy Elmira Ophelia Samboretta, will you permit me to pass the soup," and taking the plates, he offered them severally to his guests.

Robert Blackburn forgot to taste the soup, in his surprise at this new lesson in etiquette; and Nelly felt very much like crawling under the table; but the others knew Mr. Van Zandt's peculiarity so well, no notice was taken of it further than a smile at his drollery, and the dinner passed off without any other interruption.

Mr. Van Zandt was by no means a cruel master. No servants were ever happier than his; but whenever they were guilty of any delinquency, his besetting proclivity got the mastery and dictated the punishment, which, though severe to them, was amusing to beholders. For instance: his carriage-driver was very neglectful about keeping the harness and mountings in order; and once, when he had failed to attend to them, Mr. Van Zandt cleaned them himself, and putting the horses to the carriage, made the driver get inside, and then seating himself on the box, drove several miles along the public road, "giving Billy an airing," he said, in reply to the surprised neighbors who crowded to the doors and windows with their staring children, as if he had been exhibiting the sea-serpent. He never found the carriage out of order any more. The punishment was severe, but it had direct reference to the negro's better nature, and unlike the debasing lash,—I do not mean the slandered overseer's whip alone, but the more rarely-mentioned, tenfold more execrable *cat*, which has orphaned the children of many a free-born American sailor, and whose recent abolishment some *noble philanthropist* so piously deplors, —which destroys all human feeling, and makes those who are governed by it more degraded than "the beasts which perish,"—it touched his pride so keenly, every energy was aroused to avoid a repetition of the mortification;

and this odd but effective course resulted in the fact that the good habits of Mr. Van Zandt's servants had become a proverb.

In the afternoon the young people strolled off to the Silverhorn, not more than a mile from Mr. Van Zandt's, and but a short distance below the Shawnee trail. Nelly had not been there since she saw the stranger. She ran on in haste before the rest of the party, and sat down on the roots of the tree where she had related the legend. Why had n't she told Mabel about her adventure? She had often longed for her to return, that she might tell her all about it; but since her arrival, whenever the thought of communicating it would come into her mind, an unaccountable impulse would choke it down, and she had not found courage to mention it,—indeed had striven to avoid all allusion to it,—though she was eager to visit the scene again, and dreamed of it often at night. The sweet-brier running over the rocky bank opposite was full of blossoms, and the purple wake-robin lifted its head royally from its bright green ruff, at her side. Had she prayed for him as she had promised? Had she not forgotten, when thoughts of other things, perplexing and mysterious, had filled the chambers of her heart with their grim, ghostly shadows? She looked at the heap of stones whereon she had fallen. The water gurgled past them with a tremulous murmur, bending the long grass and the spear-mint in its path, and gleamed with a chastened lustre far down among the shadows of the glen, like the last look of a loved one hurried from us. Nelly's eyes were full of tears, but the approaching party gave her no time to let them flow, and brushing them away with her hand, she went lower down the stream and bathed

her face in the pure cool water. She loitered under the trees a little while, and then seeking Lu and Amy, proposed that they should start back to Lily Dell, and take a swing on the grape-vine at the school-house spring. The children readily agreed, and bidding Tony and Sally a merry good-bye, they started homeward.

CHAPTER VI.

And the strange inborn sense of coming ill,
That oft-times whispers to the haunted breast,
In a low tone which nought can drown or still,
'Mid feasts and melodies a secret guest;
Whence doth that murmur wake, that shadow fall?
Why shakes the spirit thus? 'Tis mystery all!"

MRS. HEMANS.

"DON'T let's stop at the swing, Nelly," Lucy said, as they passed from the Indian path into the lane, "because I want to tell you something." She threw back her sun-bonnet, and walking closer beside her sister, continued in an eager tone,

"Tony was telling me and Amy as you went on before us to the Silverhorn, about some Indians camped below the church. He was out hunting yesterday, and came to their tents all at once, as he passed through that papaw thicket near the White Eagle, where Lina spread the cloth last spring when we went fishing. There are ever so many, thirty or forty, he says; but he liked one they called the Strong Arm the best. There is a chief, with his mother, and a good many others. They have taken

some boys to the Choctaw Academy, near Col. Johnson's. The Strong Arm is the chief's youngest brother, and they want him to go to school, too, but he shakes his head, and says he likes his bow and arrow better than books. Tony says he can leap like a squirrel, and throw a stone clear across the river."

"Let's stop at the spring and talk about it," Nelly said, for they had nearly reached the mouth of the lane.

"Oh no," Lucy replied, "because Tony said he would ask mother to let us go with him to their camp tomorrow; and if we will go home early and have the supper-table ready by the time she comes, I know she'll let us go. I won't be afraid, will you Amy?" she continued, as they entered the road and turned toward Lily Dell. "You know they are Cherokees, and the Cherokees never trouble anybody, do they Nelly?"

Amy came close to Nelly's side, and glanced timidly around her. "I don't think I want to go," she said. "I don't think Indians are pretty; and then I can see Bill Donald jump whenever I please. I'm sure he can beat any Indian."

"Do they wear their national dress?" Nelly asked.

"Yes, and Tony says the Strong Arm has such a pretty sash, made of red yarn and white beads."

"Let's hurry on," she said; "I know if we have everything fixed nicely by the time mother comes, she will let us go. We'll start early, won't we? So we can talk to them all about their home in the South. I wonder if the chief looks like that picture of Silver Heels, that Mr. Cameron gave Mabel."

"He was the poor Indian the bad white men murdered in the woods," said Amy, with a shudder, as she caught

hold of Nelly's dress. "Please don't talk any more about it till we get home. It's so scary to talk about Indians." Nelly and Lu exchanged knowing glances, as if very much amused at Amy's fears, and with ready tact began to talk of something else.

Mabel Bracken had strayed away from her companions to a spot where the Silverhorn turned abruptly southward. Just below the bend a natural terrace had been formed of light debris brought down from the hills by the swollen stream in early spring. The shore of the brook in the high-water season, was several feet above this summer bank; and the wild ivy now wrought its delicate tapestry over it, and caressed with its green festoons the violets growing thick over the lower slope. They had ceased blooming in the meadows and open woodlands, but were as luxuriant and fresh as ever here, on account of the shade and moisture. Mabel sat down beside the stream, and resting her head against the cool ivy bank, looked up to the blue sky barely seen by glimpses through the leaves of a linden tree above her. The Silverhorn went by her feet with a low musical ripple, and in a young papaw tree on the other side, a brown thrush twittered beside the nest of its mate. Over the huge white limbs of an old sycamore that bent across the water, a gray squirrel darted to and fro like a shadow; and southward from the ripening rye-fields came the clear piping of a partridge with the stately barytone of the wind, like the key-note in some grand, beautiful anthem. Mabel had been there many times before, but not alone. One had been with her, whose brown eyes spoke a dearer language than the sweet grave papaw blossoms that looked down upon her from the wide green

leaves,—one whose gentle fingers brushing away the golden hair from her forehead, were lighter than the touch of the ivy leaves, and whose full voice thrilled her soul with a deeper happiness than the choral hymn of winds and birds and waters. Many a Sabbath afternoon she had sat beside him there, and listened with her happy head on his bosom, as he spoke of the lessons taught by the lovely things around them,—of the glorious gift of life to see, and intellect to understand, and heart to enjoy the handiwork of God; or baring his fine head reverently, read from the Book of Books, of Him who not only clothes the lily of the field, but weighs the mountains in scales, and hangs the earth upon nothing. It had been so long since she had heard from him, she had stolen hither to think without interruption, and to be drawn nearer to him as it were, by becoming again a part of the scene which his beloved society had sanctified. It was beautiful to her still; but a dreary sense of loneliness made her bow her head lower against the leafy bank, and close her eyes to shut out the picture shorn of half its loveliness, since the presence that transfigured it was no longer there. Remember, oh Mabel! that Love, though a wonderful Alchemist, is powerless to confer immortality upon the dust; and thou,—on thy forehead Dionysius is already written, and Life's bitter experiences have ever taught us such are not for the companionship, and toil, and fever-strife of the world. Oh that thou mightest be "among us, but not of us," so the lyre of thine ethereal spirit might never have one single string strained and corroded by the damp and canker of human grief. Thy cheek is as white even now, as the marriage pillows thy thin delicate fingers have been broidering,

and the blue of thine eyes is deepening with a tell-tale lustre every day. How canst thou, frail lily of the valley, bear the parching Euroclydon or the driving sleet? But he hath written of a genial Southern home, where Nature wears her bright robe always, and where strength and vigor will rebuild the trembling fabric of thy life; and thou art dreaming such happy, ravishing dreams! thou, whom they have called cold and passionless, because thy soul is lifted so far above the common nature by its spirituality. They do not know thou art for that very reason more capable of deep affection, inasmuch as there are no warring passions in thy heart, and the high, holy aim to be God-like guideth every thought. Oh, young and gifted saint! though there are few in this world who can read the golden pages of thy spirit's stainless volume, there is an Existence where the films are taken from all eyes. Till thou attain it, be happy in the love of the few who understand thee; and know 'tis a higher joy to the gifted to receive the appreciation of one kindred spirit, than all the praises of the world, however honest they may be. Be happy, did I say? Oh that thou mightst indeed be happy during the brief time until thou shalt receive the summons, "Come up hither!"

"You are cruel, Mabel."

She started up, and her heart beat quick with surprise as Robert Blackburn leaped down the bank, and stood beside her.

"I have been seeking you everywhere," he said; and taking her hand, made a sign for her to re-seat herself.

"I did not mean to stay long," she said. "Come, let us go back; Lina will be wondering where I am."

"Do not go yet, Mabel, I implore you," he said with

the sober, earnest look she had never been able to interpret, and which, in spite of her efforts, had always the effect of inducing compliance.

She hesitated but a moment. "I would rather go farther, either up or down the Silverhorn," she said. "I am ready to hear whatever you have to say, but not just here." She turned the bend, and looked at him entreatingly. He followed her until she stopped at the foot of a witch-hazel. On one side of the tree the grass grew luxuriantly, but on the other, the earth was washed away from the roots, and a black slimy stone slid down to the water's edge.

"I leave you in the morning," he said, "and I had scarcely thought you would deprive me of your society for the few hours I shall remain, when in all likelihood you will never see me again."

At any other time Mabel would have felt half-indignant at the reproach; but the state of mind in which he found her, and that peculiar look which always puzzled her, had turned her feelings into a different channel. How could she, who felt her own sorrow so keenly, be unmindful of the trouble of another, however little fellowship she might have with his grief? And then that all-pervading charity which had hovered over her life like a halo, making her tongue eloquent with words of comfort and healing, and her eyes blind to every thing but truth, would not suffer her to act as merciless reason dictated; and when she raised her eyes to his face, they were dimmed by tears.

"Forgive me," she said, "I did not go away because I was unmindful of you, but—but—"

"You love me, dear Mabel," he said eagerly, as he

attempted to grasp her hand. "Now I understand fully why your sweet sensitive spirit should seek solitude to give way to its surcharged feelings. But why not permit me to attend you, if not to wipe away your tears, at least to mingle mine—"

He could go no farther. Her small, slender figure was drawn to its utmost height, and her calm blue eyes, tearless now, searched his very soul with their clear, cold light.

"For the first and the last time, Robert Blackburn," she said, as sternly as her low voice would allow, "I must speak to you coldly. We were little children together, I know; we played under the same noble trees, studied our first lessons in the same school-house, and sang our first hymn in the same church. But farther than that, the unity has not extended. I have ever esteemed you highly, though I could not for a moment be blind to the wide chasm dividing your soul from mine, even if any worldly circumstance had allured me to forget it. On another occasion, when you uttered words which partially revealed a state of feeling on your part much to be deplored by both of us, surprise and regret, and bewilderment as to what course I should pursue, forasmuch as you were my mother's guest, sealed my lips, and brought to my eyes tears, which you, no doubt, misinterpreted. Let me be explicit. *I do not love you.* I am, as you are aware, pledged to another by a vow as binding, to my mind, as the marriage ceremony; and I feel as much insulted by the advances you have made, as if I were already Edward Cameron's wife. I have called you *friend*. I can do so no more, because you would have me prove myself a traitor in the blackest sense; and I shall feel relieved

and thankful when you leave Lily Dell, never again I trust, to disturb the peace of its inmates by your presence."

"You are severe and unjust, Mabel," he said sorrowfully, when she had ended. "I have had no reason to believe you loved Mr. Cameron. You have betrayed no emotion when his name has been mentioned; and Lina herself told me she believed you engaged yourself to him simply because he is a minister, and that you were in love with the church rather than the pastor. If I had really believed you loved him, I should have been slow to attempt to win you from him. But I know there is no more a mistaken idea than that which influences many persons to consider it dishonorable to break an engagement entered into without forethought or affection. You have convinced me that you do not love me, however, and I shall never grieve you again by any allusion to this subject; but I am unwilling to lose your esteem, for I deserve it, notwithstanding your contrary opinion."

"I know you better than you do yourself, Robert," Mabel replied. "You are led by your fancy altogether, and it arouses you sometimes almost to frenzy, when your feelings are scarcely touched; and you say and do many things which would make you hang your head if you could see them in their true light. I am glad, very glad, to know you have been acting under the impression that my affections were disengaged; and though I cannot bear witness to the propriety of your attempts to take my destiny into your own hands, I fully excuse all that has passed, on condition that no allusion ever be made to it hereafter."

"Before I promise compliance with your requisition,

Mabel, may I ask why you seemed so agitated when I found you a few minutes ago? Your manner gave evidence of feelings you would have concealed from me, and I was led to hope they were favorable, I presume from the intensity of my own."

"I had sought a spot hallowed to me by the dearest associations," she replied in a softened tone, "and I started when you came, because I could not see its consecrated quiet broken by any other footfall but—"

She would say no more. To have laid bare to his gaze the hoarded affections of her heart, would have been to her like rending the veil from the Holy of Holies; and quickly recovering her habitual calmness, she led the way toward the spot where Lina had been left with Tony and his sister. As she stepped up the bank, she shuddered to see a nest of serpents crawl from under the roots of the witch-hazel, and pass over the slippery rock into the water; and when Robert took her hand to place it in his arm, she drew it away as if beset by some prophetic fear.

The wise ones of the world may laugh at "presentiments," and question the good sense of those who are influenced by them; but I doubt if there be one human being who has not been startled, or at any rate annoyed, by forebodings at times, and whose experience does not record the verification of some unaccountable warning. The birds and beasts of the desert cry in piteous terror, and flee to the oases, taught by an ever-faithful instinct that the awful kamseen is approaching; though the sky be still clear, and the sunlight pass bright and burnished through the soft pure atmosphere. *Savans* tell us there must be some slight change in the air,

perceptible to them though not to us, the unfailing recurrence of which has taught them the certainty of coming peril. We believe what they say, and cherish the truth as a powerful auxiliary to the beautiful and not unreasonable theory, that the phenomenal universe is a perfect type of the spiritual. Is it not in harmony with every thing around us, to believe that He who teaches the bird to build her nest in spring, and to fly away with her young brood to the sunny shores of the "isles of balm" before the frosts have reddened the leaves of the tree wherein her motherly labor was accomplished,—that He who has made all the beautiful rules governing the material world, has not neglected the higher regions of Soul-Life, but has made laws and harmonies there, skilful, vigorous, unerring, and replete with heavenly consistency?

The Scriptures tell us of dreams that have been sent as warnings; and though we may rightly hesitate to inculcate the wisdom of listening to the suggestions either of dreams, presentiments, or omens, particularly as psychology is as yet so little studied, and, therefore, so poorly understood, there surely can be no impropriety in noticing the singular *accidents* of their almost prophetic verity, at times. Mabel would have laughed at any one who had told her it was superstitious dread that made her hasten away from the spot she had never left before except with lagging feet and oft-reverted eyes; for she was by no means fanciful, and looked upon all fears but those of known, palpable evils as foolish and unreasonable. She was, therefore, half-ashamed of the sickening sensation that made her totter as the harmless water-snakes passed from the roots of the tree where she

had sat many a time watching them swim far out into the water with beautiful, undulating grace, leaving a sparkling wake behind. In these days of psychological developments, we have all seen and heard enough to convince us of the power of spirit over spirit; and may it not have been in accordance with the same law which makes the clairvoyant sing, dance, or weep, in obedience to the will of another, that Mabel Bracken's soul shuddered at the presence of an evil influence of which her mind had no cognizance, and which she referred to the little reptiles because they have been made the type of malignity? Our grandfathers would have laughed to scorn any one who had asserted that by means of the electric fluid we would ever talk to our antipodes as if they stood beside us; and yet we, with the flush of youth still on our faces, and its vigor in our springy limbs, are compassing the earth with the magic wires, and sending greetings to our farthest brotherhood on the lightning's bristling wings. Let this reflection caution us against hasty denunciations of subjects that have never been sounded; and let us not, because of the discoveries with which our age is illuminated, cry *Eureka* yet. Every age has its harbingers of a Grand To Come; and those who with uplifted, seer-like hands, have ventured to part the dim, dark curtains that hide from our longing eyes the wonderful world of Mentality, may be indeed, not what their infatuated friends have considered them, prophets sanctified by the Holy Ghost for a new revelation, (an innocent yet awful blasphemy!) but the Franklins and Morses of the Intellectual, taught by its plain, eternal science which we may one day understand with as much clearness as we do geometry or the use of the globes.

The evening lay like enchantment in Lily Dell, as the old cariole with its freight of visitors entered the red gateway opening into the lawn in front of Mrs. Bracken's cottage. In the west a faint warm tinge was glowing, as if the day yet lingered lovingly, to greet with her fair, fading death-smile the round large moon that rose Pallas-like, complete and beautiful from the hoary head of a far-off mountain peak. The clustering elder bushes in the fence-corners, with their delicate blossoms like crowns of finest seed-pearl,—the heavy-headed wheat fields ripening for the fast approaching harvest, like old age bowed beneath a burthen of well-spent years, waiting to be taken from the fields of a godly life to the granary of heaven,—the dark green hemp grounds sending their breath, like incense on the dewy air,—the young Indian corn with its tender blades softly swaying in the night-breeze like the ripples of a summer sea, and the densely wooded hills that clustered about the White Eagle, as if the strange deities of this grand New World had gathered upon the heights to look at the marvellous fairywork wrought by the white children of the Great Spirit, made a picture too beautiful for words to portray.

"How sweet the locust blooms are to-night," Lina softly said to Mabel, as they passed under the trees where Robert had confided to Nelly the secret which had given her so much trouble. "If Edward were only here to enjoy them. You know how he loved their fragrance, and some one else, too," she continued, as she broke from a low bough a young twig heavy with the creamy blossoms, and began to arrange them in the twisted braids of Mabel's golden hair. "You remember where we were this time last year," and her hand sought her sister's

waist. "How little I thought I would so soon be Lina Morton, and you—"

She stopped suddenly, for the hand that returned her caress was icy cold, and Mabel's pale face gleamed like alabaster in the moonlight.

"Yes, I remember it all," she replied in a voice too low to reach the ears of Robert Blackburn and her mother, but loud enough to be heard by Lina, whose head was resting on her shoulder, while her black eyes looked up earnestly into her face. "You had seen Robert but three or four times previously; and when he broke off some blossoms from that same tree, and said they were very sweet, but other flowers were sweeter, and looked at you with those honest, noble eyes of his, I knew,—though you seemed startled, particularly when you discovered I had overheard him,—that father Mahon's foster son had won our little housewife."

"And what was father Mahon's nephew saying about the same time, pray?"

"He had stooped to gather a sweet-briar blossom," she said slowly, "and as I turned away to get far enough off not to hear your conversation, he offered it to me, but before I could take it, the leaves fell, and the flower-stalk alone remained." Her voice had sunk to a whisper and there was something in its tremor telling of gushing tears repressed and a choking throat-pain smothering utterance, that fell on Lina's ear with the force of a prophecy, though she strove in vain to read its meaning. Life to her had no lessons but those it teaches the birds and bees. Her chief delight lay in the every-day avocations of home, and though her nature was refined and graceful, it gave expression to its impulses only in the

cultivation of flowers, the execution of rare difficult fancy-work, and the nice arrangement of all domestic concerns. She could not see how Mabel read so many meanings in things which were soulless to her, and void of all expression save their obvious seeming; and she often grew impatient when she talked "in that silly highflown way," as she called it. At any other time, therefore, she would have turned away petulantly from the grave tone of her sister's voice, fearing some declaration of sentiments which always confused and never interested her; but there was such a painful rigidity about Mabel's thin delicate lips, and so intense a light in her usually serene and gentle eyes, she lay as if spell-bound on the heart whose slow heavy throbs sounded like a death-knell. She thought it so strange Mabel could be sad when the time for the return of Edgar Cameron and her husband was so close at hand; or seem so indifferent to the many cares by which she endeavored to make everything around her put on a holiday face to greet them. Every stray leaf had been sedulously clipped from the wanton hop-vines at the little chamber-window, by her thrifty hands; for there was no beauty to her eye except in order, and each reticulant opening in the primitive twine lattice must admit its own share of sunshine. The grass-pinks along the borders of the garden-walks were watched daily, and her pruning-knife was kept burnished by constant use among the rose and lilac bushes in the yard. Nor was her tidy person neglected amid her many duties. The green sun-bonnet was never forgotten, nor the homely cotton gloves, that the sweet rosy face and small white hands might be even more beautiful than ever to the beloved one who prized them so highly. And the

forefinger of her left hand, pricked from nail to joint, bore faithful witness to the industry which had filled a drawer of the old beechen clothes-press with snowy shirts and soft woollen socks, white as the young lambs of whose fleeces they were made. Other work was there, too, hid far away in one corner, as if too precious for the light,—little delicate garments, hemstitched and trimmed with ruffles fine and frail as the fringing edge of the white *Belle de nuit*,—slips of purest cambric, and small dainty caps embroidered with rarest skill by her trembling hands,—all done by stealth in her little room, as if too holy a labor to be seen or spoken of; and wrought upon, oh with what exquisite happiness, while her young cheeks flushed with hope, and her fingers handled with tenderest care the lifeless webs, as if they already covered fair dimpled baby limbs. As she lay now looking into Mabel's face, while the cariole went noiselessly down the grassy drive, she wondered that she, who thought so much, did not look forward to a future full-freighted with blessings like hers; and a troubled look, like the shadow a summer cloud casts upon springing blossoms, shaded though but lightly, her glad, happy face.

"They will come soon," she whispered, "and we will be so happy then, Mabel. You are so much stronger than you were when Edgar went away. I can tell by your voice; it is so much clearer now, and so deep and sweet. Maybe they'll come before Sunday, and we'll all go to church, and I'll sit with you and sing the *Te Deum*. I wish I could sing like you; Edward would be so pleased."

Mabel stroked her beautiful jetty hair, and said with an effort to be cheerful, that God would order the future

aright,—that they had only to trust Him without fear. And thus she had always been, willing not only, but happy to turn away from herself to minister to the peace or joy of others. Frail as the morning mist, from her earliest childhood she had known little but self-denial. When at school, while Lina and her playmates ate from their well-filled dinner-baskets the luscious gingerbread and Johnny-cake, and expressed their sincere, childish sorrow for her as she sat apart eating her slice of plain brown bread and butter, the un murmuring sweetness of her temper breathed in her cheerful reply, "It is best for me." There were few sports she could engage in, for though her spirit leaped to see her schoolmates skip the rope or go through other active games, such exercise was too much for the weak systole of her heart, whose quick blood had more than once stained her lips. So with a willing cheerfulness she bore the buff in Hoodman-blind, or turned the long grape-vine while her playfellows chased the fox through its quick evolutions; always replying, when their generous sympathy would urge her to come and try their sports just for once, and not be always waiting on them, "It is best for me." As the years of womanhood advanced, and she felt that ere long the fields and meadows would be visited no more by her ever-willing feet, and the eloquent stars that talked with her hour by hour while the spell of the night was deepening, would vainly essay to look into her curtained eyes, hid forever beneath the graveyard's oozy mould, the same heavenly assurance, though never uttered now because of the pain it might give the loved ones around her, had been written in letters of light upon her features, giving them an ethereal beauty, as if the flesh itself were becoming spiritualized,

that the life which had been so holy on earth might be translated, without the dark journey through the grave, to heaven. Thus she was living, in patient serenity busily but unobtrusively cultivating her soul for the nobler life so soon to be entered upon, when a germ unfolded itself in her heart of whose existence she had never dreamed, asking for its support a share of the energies which had been devoted to the service of God alone.

Oh plant of earthly love! beautiful art thou as the visions of paradise that come to us in dreams; and when thou art nourished by the light of one faithful presence, how bravely thy white blossoms breast the changes of the world, and bear, divinely perfected, the golden fruitage of the soul's highest capabilities! But wo betide those to whom the sunlight cometh not, or, wildest grief of all, from whom it is withdrawn!

Father Mahon, the first Episcopal clergyman who settled in Fayette, had gone thither from Virginia several years before; and purchasing a cottage near Mrs. Bracken's, established a church in the school-house, and fulfilled all parochial duties without charge, having a sufficiency of the world's goods to yield him a support. He had never married, and had devoted himself to the education of Edgar Cameron and Edward Morton, whom he left at William and Mary College when he emigrated to Kentucky, the one to prepare for the ministry, the other to fit himself by a thorough education for any vocation he might choose to follow. They had joined him the year before the opening of this story; and the old man, who had grown too infirm to officiate any longer in the church, gave his charge and his cottage to Edgar, and to Robert Morton a tract of land lying along the Kentucky river,

since he had chosen to lead a farmer's life. It was not long until father Mahon's favorites, Lina and Mabel, were theirs also; and having known each other so well through the old man's letters, the preference they had felt before they ever met soon ripened into a warmer feeling.

A few months after their arrival, Mabel had gone to the cottage with a bowl of curds for father Mahon; and when she started home, Edgar Cameron went with her. There was nothing unusual in this, but when he asked her to stop with him under the elms in the wood by the school-lot, where an opening in the trees let in the slant, crimsoning sunlight, there was something in his tone that made her pulse quicken; and when a moment after he laid his heart open before her, she gazed at him beseechingly, as if pleading to be spared some great affliction. In a low but steady voice she answered him at last. She told him of her failing health, of the certainty that her life would be demanded before many years, and the consequent wrong he proposed to do himself by making her his wife,—but never once alluded to her own affection, yearning though she was, to pour out her earnest full heart upon his bosom. They walked on in silence; and as they entered the porch at Lily Dell, Lina noticed for the first time on Mabel's face the rigid look that had perplexed and pained her so often afterward. But he came, faithful as the sun, day after day, and his eloquent entreaties, and hopeful anticipations that as she grew older, with proper care her frame would strengthen, kindled in her heart a love of life which begot an interest in everything around her, and gave a buoyancy to her step and a brightness to her face, they

had never known before. But the fever which had prostrated him the night of Lina's marriage, had well-nigh stricken her down also. Then his slow convalescence made it necessary for him to go away; and shortly after his departure, when she went one day to see father Mahon, and found him sitting in his arm-chair looking at her with a meaningless stare, the hands he was wont to extend so eagerly to welcome her hanging powerless by his side—for he was dead—she sunk again, as if beyond recovery. They urged her to go to Louisville after the old minister's burial, hoping the change might be of service to her; but she came home with the same sorrowful look, as if under the shadow of some impending calamity. Still there came never from her lips a word of complaint or petulance; and silently covering her griefs, she strove with unfailing industry to lighten the cares of all around her, and to pour the oil of comfort into the wounds of others, though her own were deepest of all.

"See Lina, a letter!" cried Nelly, who sat waiting on the stile with a package in her uplifted hand, eager to be first to tell the news. Lina sprung from the cariole, and seizing the letter, ran off to her little room, with the low glad laugh that comes from the heart of the loving and happy alone. She forgot Robert Blackburn now occupied it; and she had been so long accustomed to make it her refuge, her feet flew thither instinctively. Mabel started after her, but she ran on before, and closing the door, told her she could not come in until she herself had read the letter.

"But I feel so anxious, Lina," Mabel pleaded, with her lips to the key-hole.

"Well, but I must read it all by myself, and then you shall see it," Lina replied eagerly, and Mabel heard her light feet going to the open window.

She went into the parlor. Mrs. Bracken had gone to the kitchen, and Robert had seated himself at the end of the porch, while Lu and Amy ran shouting through the yard, pursued by a mischievous barking terrier that had already torn Lu's dress into shreds. It was not the neat holiday suit she had worn through the day, however; but one of several old tattered frocks she had been taught to put on whenever she wanted to romp, for her mother had long before discovered she might as well try to chain the wind as Lucy's hoyden spirits.

Nearly an hour had passed, when Mrs. Bracken re-entered the parlor, and seeing Mabel alone, enquired after Lina. Learning she had not yet left her room, she went and knocked at the door. There was no answer.

She knocked again. "May I come in, dear?" she said. Still there was no answer. "Perhaps she has fallen asleep," she said to Mabel, who had stolen to her side. She tried the bolt, but the door was locked.

"Go round to the window and call her, Mabel."

Mabel went out. The hop-vines were torn from the window as if by violence. She clambered up the rude stone foundation and looked into the room. Lina was not there; and with a fear that gave her supernatural strength, she sprang through the window and stepped into the room. The green sun-bonnet lay on the white counterpane of the bed, where Lina had carelessly thrown it when she entered the room, and a little brown cotton

glove beside it, as if just drawn from the hand. The tallow candle burnt dimly on the toilet table, for it had not been trimmed since Jane placed it there two hours before; and beside it lay an open letter. Mabel took the letter, and unlocked the door.

"Lina is not here, mother," she said; "but here is the letter."

"Where can she be?" Mrs. Bracken went out under the cherry-trees and called loudly "Lina!" but she heard only the echo of her own voice sent back from the dense woods, as if they mocked her with a strange human accent.

"Lina told me I might read the letter, mother," Mabel said, in a choking voice.

"Read it, then, Mabel."

She began it in silence. It was written in an awkward, unfamiliar hand, but its meaning came at length; and with a suppressed groan, she fell heavily to the floor, while the young blood dropped from her lips like crimson rose-leaves.

They carried her to the little room, and laid her on Lina's bed. Mrs. Bracken wiped the stains from her blue lips; and while the faint pulse in her temples slowly flickered into life again, she read the crumpled and bloody letter. It was from one of the laborers—an ignorant but worthy man—whom Edward Morton had employed to assist him in taking his flat-boat down the river, and gave a brief account of their homeward journey through Mississippi, until they reached the Tennessee river, where, in attempting to cross one stormy night on a worn-out ferry-boat, they were swamped, and Cameron and Morton were drowned.

"Lina, dear Lina!" groaned her wretched mother; "where, oh where is my stricken child?"

Where indeed is Lina? Build the signal-fires on the hill-tops and crags,—break the deep quiet of this summer night with the shrill blast of the trouble-horn,—let rough Tom Carper, kind-hearted Bill Donald, with brave Tony Langford, and the good neighbors, search far and near; down in the glen behind the orchard, up by the locust-trees near the roadside, through fields and woods, till the gray dawn hides from the prying sun. Follow the Silverhorn through its beetling cliffs, search every spot where a human foot might stay itself,—you will find no token of the lost. But go along the river below the White Eagle,—creep down the rifts to a shelving rock, from whose light alluvion springs a lonely black-thorn. Part the boughs with their innocent white blossoms leaning over the silent water, and lift from that bending twig the weight that bears it down. 'Tis a little blue-check apron, caught by the covetous thorns. Look in its tidy braided pocket, and read on a corner of the folded linen handkerchief the name of Lina Morton wrought in Turkey-red.

CHAPTER VII.

"Back then once more to breast the waves of life,
To battle on against the unceasing spray,
To sink o'erwearied in the stormy strife,
And rise to strive again."

IN the neighborhood of one of the many beautiful streams that, springing to light among the outliers of the Cumberland mountains, find their way to the Tennessee through ranges that lose their rugged aspect and soften into hills as they approach the river, a white tent-cloth, bordered with a gay-colored fringe of yellow yarn, and fastened by iron rings to a number of stakes about a foot above ground, gleamed like a stray summer cloud amid the pine trees that surrounded it. In front of it, under a spreading chestnut, an Indian woman was busily occupied in washing; but the garments were apparently not for her own tribe, the white linen shirts and handkerchiefs bearing witness to their kinship with the wardrobe of the Pale-face. Her labor was evidently one of willingness, however, by the care with which she washed a handful of freshly-dug buckeye roots,—her only soap,—in the clear stream at her feet, and placed them in an iron pot elevated on stones over a bright fire, wherein the clothes were deposited also, and watched industriously as the white bubbles formed by her primitive detergent gathered over the surface of the boiling water, and glistened in the morning sun-rays that pierced the pines on the hills above her. When it was nearly noon, she

finished her labor by rinsing the clothes in the running water, and then spreading them on a young bamboo-vine drawn from a low pecan sapling, and tied firmly to a stake driven in the ground. Securing them to the line by means of long sharp spines from a neighboring thorn-tree, she walked briskly up the stream, which in the region of the tent ran through a narrow, meadow-like level; and then turning westward, she stopped under a low crag that overhung the narrow flat along the water, where another woman of her tribe sat pounding Indian corn. A tent similar to the other, but of coarser fabric, lifted its white roof in the hill-side opposite.

"It is almost noon, Panola," she said, as she lifted a conch-shell which lay beside the woman. She blew a long hollow blast; and then taking up an earthen bowl filled with fine white meal made by pounding husked corn, she returned to her laboratory under the chestnut tree. There were several nails driven in its trunk, from which were suspended different cooking utensils. She took down a griddle, a wooden tray, and a tin bucket, all of which she washed in the running water; and laying them on the grass to dry, sat down against the tree, and watched the smouldering fire whence she had removed the cumbrous kettle. In a few minutes two Indian youths, a boy and girl, came from the direction of the other wigwam. The boy laid at her feet a piece of fresh venison, and the girl stood as if waiting to receive a command. The woman pointed to the sun through the boughs of the tree.

"The Teacher has been told his meal shall be ready before the shadows lengthen eastward," she said, "and that Maloleka and the Red Moccasin shall go with him

to the Life-spring afterward. Is the venison dried, and the parched corn put away?"

"Our tasks are done," the girl replied, "and the sunshine will not go more cheerfully than we with the Teacher to the spring." She took the tin bucket and went to fill it from the brook, while the boy brought sticks and brush to rekindle the fire. The meal was kneaded in the wooden tray, and a thin cake baked on the heated griddle. The venison, cut into slices, was broiled on the coals, and carefully lifted by Monica and the girl into a dish of coarse delft-ware, which formed a part of the woman's table furniture. The boy went to a spring a short distance up the stream, and filled the bucket with cool fresh water. Monica then led the way to the tent, her children following with the promised repast. She lifted a corner of the tent-cloth which served for a door, and throwing it back, revealed the interior of the lodge, and its occupant. Around a stout pole in the centre, which supported the tent, small stakes about two feet high had been driven at equal distances from it, and a skilful web, woven of young grape-vines from them to the post, made a strong seat or table, as might be preferred. Opposite the door a bed had been made in the same manner, whereon lay several buffalo robes and a scarlet blanket. Over the table a pair of stag antlers had been nailed to the centre pole, from which were suspended an overcoat and cap. On a low stool beside the table a young man, apparently about twenty-five, sat with his elbow on the grape-vine lattice-work, supporting his head on a hand so thin and transparent it seemed scarcely to offer any obstruction to the noon-day light. His auburn hair rippled from his forehead like ebbing

summer waves; and his brown eyes, gentle and tender, though full of the dormant fire of manly thought, were sad and restless, as if some "hope deferred" were struggling in his heart.

"Will the Teacher eat?" Maloleka said in the full silvery tones of her race,—as if the birds and streams had taught her their language,—while she placed the food on the table before him.

"You are punctual, and very kind, little wild-bird," he said, as he stroked her long black hair. "The Great Spirit has been merciful indeed in revealing such deliverers as I have found. I shall think of you very often when I return to my own country, and will go whenever I can to the school whither the youth of your tribe have been taken; and if I hear you have not forgotten the lessons I have tried to teach you out of the Great Book, I shall bless more and more the affliction that threw me in your way."

"But why must the Teacher go?" Monica asked. "He is weak as the willow saplings by the river, and his blood is white as milk. If he will stay till the moon of strawberries comes again, he will be strong to go a great distance. The Oak Leaf and the medicine-woman will come back in the moon of new corn, and the medicine-woman will give him herbs that will fire his blood and make his sinews strong. He can chase the bear and the deer by day, and teach the Cherokees by night until the winter is past, and the snow is gone from his native hills."

"Will the Teacher stay?" the boy asked, as he and his sister came closer to the invalid, eager with hope that the picture their mother had drawn would win an easy assent.

"I love my good Indian mother, and my dark-skinned sister and brother very dearly," he said, "but the brother who lies under the smooth tide of the river was dearer to me; and there is one in my country who will mourn his death with as deep a grief as that which has turned Monica's face away from the warriors of her tribe since the Swift Arrow went to the Great Hunting Grounds."

Maloleka and her brother sat down at his feet, and Monica with folded arms and compressed lips stood beside him, listening with Indian firmness while he spoke of a sorrow like her own.

"Shall I stay away from such a sister?" he continued, as a haze gathered in the woman's eyes,—“from a sister who will find her only comfort in hearing me say I was with him to the last, and that her name was on his lips until the water flooded utterance and life. She has a mother too, who will be my mother one day, and whose grief for his loss will be heavy as for a son; and there is one other,” he said, in a softer one, “one other, with eyes like the chastened blue of the sky reflected in the limpid depths of the river, and a heart as pure as a little child's, who is waiting to greet me with a voice sweeter than the wood-robin's. Must I stay away from her?”

The boy and girl sat silent, while their mother drew nearer, and said in a clear, firm tone, but deep and sorrowful,

"The Teacher must go, when he is strong enough to ride the Red Moccasin's pony, and the boy shall go with him, to learn the lessons of the pale-face, so he may talk to the Great Spirit also. And when the Teacher goes to the lodge of the young squaw whose chief was drowned in the river, he must tell her how the Indian woman suf-

ferred through five-score moons, until the white brother taught her to seek 'the peace of God which passeth understanding.'"

"I will," he replied; "but Lina, dear Lina! how shall I tell her of this awful bereavement? Oh I could almost wish,—I could wish, but for thy sake, my Mabel, that I had died also, to be spared this heart-rending duty." He bowed his head on the trellis table, and remained some time in prayer. When he arose, Monica and her children had left the tent, and the slanting sunbeams admonished him it was time to take the projected excursion. Quickly despatching his simple meal, he went to seek his young ciceroni, who were with their mother under a tree near the margin of the Blue Lance, as the Indians had named the stream before the tent. Maloleka sat by her brother's side, watching him polish and point a set of oaken arrows; but they sprang up gladly when they saw him coming; and though fleet-footed as rabbits, walked soberly beside him, keeping pace with his feeble footsteps as he essayed, for the first time, to visit the spring whose healthful waters had aided the kind attentions of his Indian nurses in saving him from the grave. It was scarcely half a mile from the tent, but more than once he was compelled to rest by the way. The path thither ran along the Blue Lance until it emptied into a larger stream, which wound westward through the hills to the Tennessee. At its mouth a rude stone causeway had been built across the larger stream, of stones heavy enough to resist the winter floods; and there could scarcely be a more interesting picture than those two beautiful children, in the antique dress of their tribe, guiding the feeble stranger across the primitive bridge

their people had constructed in a wild where a human foot had rarely trod except the tameless Red man's. The hills arose in grand disorder on every side; and the many wild flowers made an ever-changing kaleidoscope as they passed on to the Tishamingo spring. The spring-brook ran off in the same direction as the creek they had just crossed, but a toilsome hill intervened; and the Indian boy and his sister conducted Edgar Cameron around it, to spare him the fatigue of climbing. As they rounded the hill toward the spring, a scene was spread before him so enchanting and heavenly, he lifted his hat instinctively, and walked on with bared head and in silence. The waters of the spring bubbled up at the foot of an abrupt eminence, and floated off between green banks sloping gently upward toward the hills. Young holly-trees and slender pines grew thick along the declivities; and closer to the margin of the brook, the dogwood with its waxen blossoms, and the fragrant, purple-tufted tear-blanket leaned over the water, their light boughs festooned with delicate vines, whose mist-like blossoms of the purpling rose-color that pervades a morning haze, looked timidly at their faces in the stream below. The declining sun, through an opening in the trees, shone full upon the current up to the leaping waters of the spring; and it was as if some beneficent gnome had touched the earth with his magic wand, and called forth a treasure of molten gold, while the sombre pine-trees, a century old, looked down from the breathless heights in silent awe.

"The Teacher has talked to the Cherokees about the Waters of Life," Maloleka said, as they stood at the head of the spring, watching the white pebbles as they

were thrown almost from the bottom to the surface, by the force of the vigorous current. "Are the rivers that never dry like these waters?"

"Waters of life indeed," Edward Cameron said, but not in reply to the girl. Her words deepened the impression the picture had made when it first burst upon his sight; and then remembering the almost miraculous curative properties of the water, he went on, forgetful of all save the beautiful fountain bubbling at his feet. "Water of life has it been to me. Oh! if I may be spared to bring her hither, so her blue eyes may brighten with the joy that ever shines in their quiet depths when we are alone with nature,—that her precious limbs may grow strong through its healing influence, and her heart's uncertain flow become steady and serene. My Mabel, my beautiful Star of Bethlehem!"

"Is that the star that led to Christ?" Maloleka asked timidly, as if afraid she was trespassing. Edgar Cameron smiled.

"Yes," he replied, "the Star of Bethlehem led the wise men I told you about, to the place where Christ was born; and since then, a little white flower that blooms before any other blossom comes out of the cold earth has been called the Star of Bethlehem. But the star I was talking about, is the young maiden I love so dearly; and I call her so not only because she is always sweet and cheerful whether others are or not, but because she too points the way to Christ by her simple, holy life. If the Great Spirit will allow, I will bring her with me, to live in the Southern city; and every summer we will come to the Life-spring, and Maloleka will then receive more beautiful lessons than I can teach; for the white maiden

worships the Great Spirit in songs sweeter, oh, so much sweeter than the birds my little Indian sister loves to mimic; and she will teach Maloleka all the melodies of her people."

"But will she not frown on the dark-faced Cherokee? The Strong-Arm went with his mother to the lodge of a white woman on the bank of the Wide River, and she laughed at the medicine-woman and gave her soap to wash the dirt off her face, which you know was a great sin, for old people and medicine-women are sacred. The Strong-Arm drew his bow, and would have shot her down, but she fled; and then his mother commanded him to leave the village with her."

"My Mabel never sported with the feelings of any living thing," he replied; "and when she hears how tenderly the Red Moccasin and his mother bore me from the Tennessee shore to the pleasant tent where they have tended me through a long and terrible illness; and how diligently the Red Moccasin and Panola's children have sought in the remorseless tide for the body of the drowned, she will long to come to the Cherokees, to clasp their hands, and kneel with them in prayer."

"The Oak-Leaf and the Swift-Arrow always loved their white brethren," the Red Moccasin said, "but their young brother, the Strong-Arm, says he never will forget the insult a pale-face offered to his mother; and when the tribe went with their youth to the Indian school in Kentucky, though the Strong-Arm made ready to go also, he said the teaching and the faith of the Red men were good enough for him, and he meant to come back with his mother. But the Swift-Arrow's son desires to go with the Teacher; and he will learn to read in books,

and will bring home a blue-eyed squaw fair as the dog wood blossoms, to sing like a bird in his tent, and bead his moccasins."

Edgar Cameron could scarcely hide the smile that sprung out on his face as the boy of fourteen summers drew up his shapely figure with an air of the grandest dignity, while his black eyes flashed with pride over the picture so vividly limned by his rude young fancy.

Early in July, Edgar Cameron, with his young guide, left the Cherokee camp. The sun was just rising as he emerged from the tent, followed by Monica and her daughter, with the other woman before mentioned, and her children, two half-grown youths, who had been left by the chief to take care of the females, and tend the young corn. It might have seemed strange to one acquainted with the strict discipline of the Cherokees, that Monica would assume the right of sending her son away without the sanction of the chief; but her influence over him was such, no act of hers was ever questioned; and often in cases of difficulty he depended more upon her judgment than his own. Grave and apparently stoical as adamant, no prejudice ever distorted her unbending uprightness; and though she had always kept aloof from the tribe,—for she was a Mohawk, the child of a chief by a Spanish mother, whose name she bore, and had been taken captive by the Shawnees and sold to the Cherokees while still in her early childhood,—she was ever readiest to attend the sick, to aid the feeble in preparation for travel, and to watch the young children when their mothers were in the fields. The Swift-Arrow saw her first when his tribe had made a visit to the

Shawnees in the neighborhood of the Miami river. She was then a young girl, serving in Tecumseh's tent. The Swift-Arrow, struck by her great beauty, traded for her with the Shawnee chief, and made her his wife. With the intense high temperament of her race, she clung to her deliverer; and by her devotion and unswerving rectitude, obtained an influence over him and his people superior even to that of their medicine-women, who were regarded as priestesses. Five years after her adoption among the Cherokees, the Swift-Arrow was killed by a bear, and his body lay three days in the woods before it could be found by his tribe, though they sought him night and day. Monica went with them, wild but silent, and her quick eye was first to discover the red plumes he had worn away, scattered over the green boughs of a hazel thicket. Vultures had stripped the fine stalwart limbs, and the bones glared mockingly in the sunlight. Gloomily the warriors gathered them up, and mournfully the death-song sounded through the bright autumn night. But the eyes of the Mohawk were tearless still, and the women looked at her in fear and wonder, muttering to each other that Wahkan Shecha had hung his black mantle over her; but after many moons had passed, and she wore the same unchanging stony look, her face never brightening except when her children's quick, beautiful gambols attracted her, they knew she could not blot from her heart the memory of the dead chief.

The Oak-Leaf, next in age, became the chief, according to the usage of the Natchez Indians, of whom this body of Cherokees was an off-shoot. But Monica was retained in the tasseled tent, and her children wore the royal costume. The tribe wintered usually in the neigh-

borhood of Baton Rouge, and traded with the people of the fort, or went in wooden canoes to New Orleans to exchange baskets and moccasins for such articles of dress and service as suited the habits of their race. They returned to their summer camp near the Tennessee early every spring, to plant corn and yams, while the medicine-woman went with the Strong Arm through the mountains to gather herbs and roots. The Oak Leaf, having heard through a party of Choctaws returning from Kentucky, of the Indian school near Georgetown, determined to take the youth of his own tribe thither; and after they had finished planting in March, went on with the Choctaws and their agent. He proposed to Monica to send her son also, but she shook her head, and without giving any reason, briefly said "He must stay with Maloleka."

One morning in May, while she and her daughter sat in the tent busily fringing a new cloth, the Red Moccasin came in haste from the Tennessee, and told them to go with him to the help of a white man who was lying half dead on the river shore. They went, and assisted in bringing Edgar Cameron to their lodge, where he lay insensible many hours. When he recovered consciousness, he told them of his drowned companion, who sunk before they reached the shore, in spite of all his efforts to sustain him. The Red Moccasin went straightway to search for the body, and with the sons of Panola, the other woman, dragged the river up and down, but found nothing except the saddle-bags of Edgar Cameron, which had been caught by the roots of a tree. It was many days before Cameron was able to tell his kind preservers the depth of his gratitude; but when he grew stronger,

he revealed to them so much more of the truths of religion than they had ever heard before, they were won not only to love his faith, but to feel an affection and reverence for himself amounting almost to worship; and when he requested Monica to let him watch over the education of her son, and fit him to be a teacher of his people, she listened earnestly, though her woman's heart could not fully consent until the day he told her of the stricken loved ones in a far-off home, and the probable prospect that he would return before many years.

The Strong Arm, in one of their Southern excursions, fell in with a party of Paducahs on the Sabine river, and traded with them for a beautiful, sturdy Mexican pony, which he gave to the young Red Moccasin. The little animal was tethered to a sapling by the tent; and as Maloleka and the rest came near him, pricked his ears playfully, in anticipation of the gentle strokes and low caressing words his young mistress had ever been wont to bestow. The girl ran her fingers through his delicate mane, and tried to speak, but her lips quivered; and clasping her arms around his slender neck, she laid her cheek against his shining chestnut shoulder, and burst into tears.

"The young Mohawk has forgotten the brave-hearted Cherokee chief was her father," Monica said, in a tone half reproving, half encouraging, as she unclasped her child's hands, and made a sign for her to assist in adjusting behind the richly beaded saddle-cloth a small white tent-linen, neatly folded, over which she fastened Edgar Cameron's saddle-bags, one end containing his simple wardrobe, the other filled with dried venison and parched Indian corn. Her son in a travelling suit of dressed

deer-skin, with a soft leather wallet at his back, and a quiver full of flinted arrows, held in one hand a polished cross-bow, curiously decorated with small cornelian pebbles and mica, and in the other a quaintly woven bridle-rein of scarlet yarn, by which, as soon as his mother's preparations were ended, he slowly led the pony across the stream, followed by the rest of the party through the shaded defiles that led to a high level plain, a kind of nucleus whence the various Indian trails radiated, and the place also to which the Cherokees that remained at the camp always went to see the departing go, or to greet them when they returned. The Red Moccasin was familiar with all the paths that led upward through Tennessee, and as far as the main sources of the Green river in Kentucky; for the region comprising Middle Tennessee and South Kentucky was the favorite hunting-ground of his tribe, and, according to their custom, he had been using the bow in the woods with the chief hunters since his twelfth year. Fleet and untiring as the deer, it had been arranged that he should go on foot, guiding Cameron on the pony until they should reach the white settlement on Green river, where Cameron had friends. There he could purchase a horse, and become himself the guide to Louisville, as he was familiar with the route.

Fearless and silent the dusk Mohawk stood on the farthest border of the plain, with Maloleka by her side, watching the last gleam of her boy's red mantle as he passed like a bright bird through the trees. But though her features wore the stern, immovable look which had characterized them for years, her thin, rigid lips had a soft expression, and her forehead a serenity not imparted

by the rays of the upcoming sun, though they came down like a glorious benison upon the dark wild band as they retraced their way to the tents. The influence of a Divine faith had done in a few weeks more than years of busy labor, and change of scene, and stirring incident,—those sure nepenthes to so many spirits,—could accomplish for her broken captive-heart; and the knowledge of the blameless, beautiful life of the Holy Christ, so truly heroic, yet so gentle and unwarlike, had softened her stoicism into firmness, and illumined her long darkened mind with the light of a happy, peaceful trust. And that night, instead of the stony recusant look she had always turned to the stars beyond whose rays she had been told the Great Spirit sat enthroned, a tempered confiding gleam went upward, dove-like, from her earnest eyes, as she knelt with Maloleka by the low murmuring Blue Lance, and repeated "Our Father who art in Heaven."

CHAPTER VIII.

These are the elms, and this the door
With trailing woodbine overshadowed,
But from the step, forevermore
The sunlight of that child has faded.

READ.

"Books! books!" Mr. Milford stood on the front gallery of the old school-house, the silver streaks in his jet-black hair shining in the September morning sun, while he called the children from their various sports to

begin the labor of the day. Little Amy Bracken, with two or three classmates, sat outside the house by the stone chimney, busily studying her "First Lessons in Geography," and half-angrily repelling the importunity of a girl who was trying to make her talk. A party of boys at some distance was shouting under a papaw thicket over the game of "Mumble-the-peg;" and two others, impish-looking youngsters, but with good-humored, noble faces, were standing behind a locust tree, evidently planning some mischief, by the low tones with which one explained the use of three large broaches of bright red yarn he drew from his hat, while the other rubbed his hands and hopped about as if eager for the sport to begin.

"Books! books!" And the young feet flew from every quarter at the call, all crowding pell-mell to the door, except Lucy Bracken and a great overgrown girl, who were building spring-houses by the brook-side, and daubing them with mud. They heard the teacher's voice, and started, but with apparent reluctance, and were the last to enter the school-room. Amy sat next the girl who had been teasing her to talk, a blue-eyed rollicking thing, who would rather take a slight birching any day, than study a lesson long enough to know it well. Class after class recited, until the morning had almost passed, and the time had arrived for "setting copies." This was Amy's jubilee, for Mr. Milford's chair being close to her desk, she dared not whisper nor stir out of her place while he sat there; but after he had arranged the copy-books for her class, he had to look after two long forms of unruly boys, on the other side of the house, who half the time, instead of writing, were using the feather-ends of their quills for brushes, their inkstands for palettes, and

doing wonders in the artistic line on middle leaves purloined from their copy-books. He was so occupied watching them now, the other scholars were without surveillance, and made busy use of their chances for fun. A string of urchins on a bench between the big boys and the girls were chewing paper, and trying which could make the wads stick tightest to the ceiling. One chap had stolen from his place, and was busy sticking pins, point-upward, through the shuck bottom of Mr. Milford's chair; while Lu Bracken, who had wrapped half-a-dozen angle-worms in a piece of brown paper, and brought them into the school-room in her pocket, after folding each one separately in a neat little note made from her pillaged copy-book, was passing them round to the different girls, and choking with laughter at their ill-suppressed shrieks, as the writhing things crawled out on their fingers.

"Now I'll talk to you, Hannah," Amy whispered, as she sidled up to the girl before-mentioned. "I didn't know my lesson when you worried me so this morning, and I won't talk to anybody when I have to study, you know. But I know all my tasks now, and we can have a nice chat."

"Oh yes, you're mighty good now, when nobody wants to talk to you," Hannah Littell replied, jerking away from her pettishly, and mumbling busily over her book, as if determined for once to have a perfect lesson. But Amy was not to be repulsed, so she slyly put one arm around Hannah's waist, and began to tickle her.

"Let me alone, I tell you!" Hannah hissed out between a laugh and a whisper, at the same time turning away from her book, which was wholly forgotten now, in her desire for a romp. They began in good earnest, try-

ing which could out-tickle the other with as much zeal and dexterity as two boxers would have displayed, while their effervescing mirth came out every little while in an ill-suppressed titter. All the children on their side the house had forgotten study in their enjoyment of the sport, and loud whispers of "Go it, Amy!" "Hurrah for Hannah!" stirred up their young blood to fever-heat. Amy at last, having laughed herself tired, took advantage of a moment when Hannah was off her guard, and giving her a lunge, sent her sprawling over a gang of Abecedarians on the end of the form.

"Joo-roo-zlum! but that was a scrouger!" whispered Jack Leigh, the boy with the red yarn broaches, to his companion in mischief, as they turned from their books for a moment to see the contest. Hannah looked at him, half angry and much mortified. She would rather any boy in school had exulted over her defeat than Jack Leigh; determined therefore to restore herself in his estimation, though with no ill feeling toward the mischievous Amy, she sprang to her feet, and seizing her little competitor, shook her as if she had been a willow withe, and at one stout blow thrust her up against the logs of the wall at the upper end of the desk. Jack Leigh snorted out, as Amy, still laughing, squatted close in the corner, completely conquered, and looking at Hannah, who had slid close up to see if she was hurt, said in a very business-like tone, "Suppose we quit?"

Hannah of course consented, and Amy arose to resume her place at the desk, when she encountered the surprised, ireful eyes of Mr. Milford fixed full upon her. He had been standing with his arms folded from the beginning of the scuffle, silently watching the encounter

to its close. Amy looked at him for an instant, spell-bound.

"Mr. Milford!" she said at last, in a tone of astonishment, as if he had been the aggressor rather than herself. The scholars tittered, and Amy, her eyes filled with tears of terror, though she could not shake off the mirthful spirit which had beset her, bent her head lower and lower over her book as he approached the desk where she and Hannah Littell sat.

"I am more than surprised at you, Amy," he said. "You have been my brag scholar heretofore; but what shall I say to your friends now? That you scramble about like an ape when your teacher's back is turned, instead of behaving like the little lady I have boasted of for the last six months?"

Amy began to cry. "I knew all my lessons," she said, "and thought I would play just a little. But I never did so badly in school before, though I do talk sometimes," she added, as if afraid he would think she meant to say she was always good. Her honesty touched him.

"I know you are a very good girl, Amy, and I will excuse you to some extent this time; but what can I say to you?" he continued harshly, as he turned to Hannah Littell. "You are a much larger girl than Amy, and should be severely reprov'd for setting her such an example."

"I commenced it first, Mr. Milford," Amy said, unwilling for Hannah to bear the blame which she herself deserved.

"No matter for that," he replied; "you have done badly enough, and will not be wholly excused. But you,

Hannah, so much larger and older than Amy, should be teaching her not only in studies but behavior, instead of being out-stripped by her in every thing."

Hannah now began to cry, but more in anger than sorrow, and Mr. Milford turned and went to another part of the room. Joe Shelton, the boy who stuck the pins in the chair, took advantage of his opportunity to remove them, fearing to breast the tide of wrath which he knew would be poured out without measure if he were discovered, and quiet once more settled over the school-room. Hannah Littell bent her head over the desk, sobbing bitterly, and every little while whispering angrily to Amy, who sat close beside her, with her head bowed in the same way, and alternately laughing and coaxing, as Hannah's droll changes from anger to sorrow, and then again to mirth, affected her.

"But you're too mean to live," she muttered, as Amy said something in a sly whisper calculated to make her laugh. "Here you sat and let old Milford shame me for being the biggest and oldest, when you know you are three weeks older than I am, if you *are* little, you—oh, I don't know what to call you," and she sobbed afresh.

"Well, Hannah, I could n't tell him I was older than you, because I had been talking to him too much any how; and then it was so funny for him to think you are older than I am," and Amy laughed again.

"I wish you'd go off to your end of the seat; I don't want your company, Amy Bracken," Hannah replied. "You're mean any how."

"Now don't get mad, Hannah," Amy pleaded. "We've got crab-lanterns and Johnny-cakes in our basket, and I'm going to give you some at play-time.

The crab-lanterns are made of peaches, not old dried peaches, but nice ripe ones off the Heath by the garden wall. And then you know Jack Leigh promised us he would go with us to the haw-tree back of Granny Neale's orchard. Won't we have a fine time?" she said coaxingly, without venturing, however, to move her head, for fear of encountering the angry eyes of her teacher again. She could not have called to her aid a stronger Mediator than the tempting bait she had just offered. Hannah was bought over; but still unwilling to be put in a good humor altogether, vented her remaining spite on Jack Leigh.

"He thought he was very smart when he laughed at me," she said, "but I'll match him. I just want him to offer me another red apple to-morrow. I'll show him whether I'll take it or not. And I shan't go to the haw-tree, neither. Don't you go, Amy. Let's stay at the spring, and don't let's speak to him."

"Well," said Amy, eagerly, glad of the chance to restore peace between herself and Hannah, knowing full well, I doubt not, if her young mind reasoned at all about it, that one glance from Jack Leigh's fine eyes would scare away all Hannah's angry resolutions.

"School is dismissed."

In regular order the girls first arose and walked slowly to the door, each curtsying to Mr. Milford as she passed out. Amy and Hannah started also, but had hardly risen before Mr. Milford waved his hand for them to resume their seats.

"Amy Bracken and Hannah Littell will be kept in during play-time on account of misconduct," he said in a decided tone. The boys looked at him in surprise, and

the girls outside clustered around the door, for Amy had never been punished before, and they did not know what to think of it.

"Attention!" the teacher said sternly. The girls darted from the doors, and the boys started in the same instant to their feet, and filed out with regular tread like a body of soldiers. There were five or six old offenders left on the forms, who had been imprisoned so often for bad lessons or behavior, they had grown like the story-book's inmate of the Bastile, not only familiar but content with their incarceration, and found many sources of amusement to indemnify them for the loss of the sports outside. One chap, a boy about thirteen years old, who never missed his lessons but was always kept in for misconduct, sat by a sap-head of his own age, explaining the centripetal and centrifugal forces by means of a fly transfixed to a pin, and twirling rapidly with a miserable buzzing sound. Two others, who had driven a trade between a shred of an old India-rubber shoe and a bit of shoemaker's wax, which articles they chewed in lieu of tobacco, were trying which could spit farthest towards the hearth; and a red-headed girl on the opposite side of the room from Amy, was nervously waiting for Mr. Milford to get fairly outside the house that she might pitch a chunk of pickled cabbage at the new prisoner, by way of tendering her the hospitalities of the place.

Mr. Milford, who always rode to school, kept his horse in an old stable on the corner of the school-lot farthest from the road. There was a thick grove near it, and he usually went thither during the noon play-time, to read or practise elocution, of which he seemed exceedingly

fond. His departure was always the signal for mischief to begin.

"Come, Jack," said Joe Shelton, who had been so interested in Jack Leigh's plans in the morning, "let's make the bridle now. Granny Neale's calf is in this end of the meadow, and we can drive it through the gate in a minute." He looked wistfully as he spoke toward a gate which opened just above the spring, into a blue-grass pasture, where two old but well-favored horses, and a cow and calf were grazing. But Jack rather hesitated.

"I promised Hannah and Amy I would go with them to the haw-tree," he said. "Let's go and get them some haws first, and we can twist the rope and bridle the calf as we come back."

They started off up the road, and passing beyond the limit of the lot, climbed over into a thick wood, and followed a path which led to the haw-tree. It was just back of Granny Neale's orchard, which skirted the meadow that sloped down to the school-grounds on the eastern side. Amy and Hannah sat looking dejectedly through the little window before their desk, which admitted a full prospect of the meadow and back grounds beyond the spring. They had essayed to be social with the other captives; but they, on account of their pre-emption right to Penance-dom were so very patronising, and though disposed to be agreeable, manifested such an air of condescension,—as if they considered Amy and her companion little better than intruders,—they sought amusement and consolation by looking out of doors, and kept their thoughts busy with conjectures as to the probable whereabouts of Jack Leigh, whom they missed.

from the groups of boys at play under the sycamores. They had not perplexed themselves long, however, when they were startled by a shout; and looking in the direction to which the laughing faces of the children were turned, they saw Jack Leigh and Joe Shelton coming full tilt toward the gate, astride Granny Neale's calf, which was bellowing lustily. The cow ran after them, piteously lowing, and the two old horses, pricking their ears and snuffing the air, loped round and round in terror at this new feat of subjugation. The boys in the lot flew to the gate with wild shouts and laughter, each one eager to have the honor of opening it for the triumphal entry of the young bovestrians; and the reprobates inside the school-room crowded to the door, forgetful of every thing but the new entertainment. Terrified, the poor animal flew past the sycamores, the whole troop of children yelling like a pack of hounds at its heels. Jack Leigh finding his seat not the easiest to maintain, dropped the bridle he had securely fastened round the calf's muzzle, and was holding by its horns, while Joe in turn clutched him round the waist. The bridle had scarcely touched the ground before it was caught by one of the boys, who started off with it, the calf following as it had been wont to obey the rope of the milk-woman. Round and round the school-house they went in uproarious disorder, till one of the smaller boys, who had seized the calf's tail, and was borne half-leaping and half-flying behind, received a kick from its heels which sprawled him on the ground. Jack and his comrade tumbled off and ran to the prostrate little desperado, followed by the rest, who helped to gather him up and carry him to the spring. They washed his face and brushed the dust off his clothes

in double quick time, knowing very well what would be the consequence if he reported them to Mr. Milford. Then opening the gate again, they suffered the calf to retreat, halter and all, though Jack looked with longing eyes after the bridle which he had made of beautiful soft yarn, smuggled from his mother's weaving-room. He and Joe had immortalized themselves by their daring achievement, and the boys and girls clustered around them much after the fashion of older children whose leaders have won renown by exploits not a whit more commendable. The two boys appreciated their "distinguished consideration;" and thrusting their hands into their breeches pockets, drew forth the luscious fruit they had gathered before their ride, and distributed the bright red berries among them, reserving each a pocketfull for the children in the house.

"Come, let's give these to Hannah and the rest of them," Jack said to his partner, as he started toward the school-house. The boys and girls followed, and in a few minutes were clattering in behind their leaders like a herd of unruly goats. Jack and Joe gave Amy and Hannah the largest share, and divided the remainder between the others. Amy, who had quite recovered her spirits while the calf-ride was going on, quivered with mischief that could not any longer be restrained; so she sprang out from her desk, and walking to the centre of the room, called out, "Attention!" in a voice so like Mr. Milford's, a unanimous shout broke from the throats of the whole troop.

"Give us a lesson in elocution, Amy," called out the bright-eyed philosophichal demonstrator in the corner.

"All the children be seated, then," she said, "and I will."

They crowded pell-mell to the forms, boys and girls sitting side by side indiscriminately, some perching like monkeys on the desks, while Amy, with a Greek Lexicon upside-down in the absence of Mr. Milford's Book of Elocution, cleared her throat to begin.

"Es, es, — ches, ches, — utches, utches, — rutches, rutches, — crutches, crutches!" she began, her voice growing louder and louder, as she gravely strode up and down the room, majestically as her little wiry limbs would allow, while her audience were convulsed with laughter. Mr. Milford had received in the spring a copy of the *Lady of the Lake*, which was first published the year before. Some of its finest passages he was in the habit of repeating as exercises in elocution, and Amy had picked up several fragments of them. After the laughter had subsided, she walked up to the stone fire-place, and assuming a tragic air, began:—

"Fitz James was brave:—Though to his heart
The life-blood thrilled with sudden start,
He manned himself with dauntless air,
Returned the Chief his haughty stare;
His back against a rock he bore,
And firmly placed his foot before,"

and she braced herself against the stones, and thrusting one little foot defiantly forward,

"Come one, come all! this rock shall fly
From its firm base as soon as I!"

she shrieked at the top of her voice, while she looked a terrific challenge at the spectators. A louder shout of applause went up from the delighted children; and

Amy, still maintaining her place against the wall, was gathering breath for another delivery of the tragic or heroic, when glancing toward the door, the first object that met her eyes was Mr. Milford, who seemed to have sprung up by magic, like Apollyon, from the bowels of the earth.

"Books!" he said in a stentorian voice, and the scholars crept like mice to their several seats; all but Amy, who stood her ground indeed, but in a very different spirit from that she had been representing, for she was speechless and motionless with terror, expecting nothing short of annihilation. Mr. Milford walked up to her and raised his hand. She dodged, expecting a blow; but he laid it gently on her shoulder, and whispered in her ear,

"You have done bravely, Amy. I wish I were half so apt."

She burst into tears. It was such a different issue from what she had expected; and returning to her seat with a feeling of relief altogether indescribable, she inwardly resolved never to laugh nor play in school again,—if she could help it.

It was Friday afternoon, and the school was dismissed two hours earlier than on any other day. Lucy and Amy, leaving the companions with whom they usually walked along the main road as far as the lane which led to Lily Dell, sprang over the fence by the spring, and ran along a foot-path through the wood, which led to a gap opposite the lawn gate, thereby shortening the distance several rods. They did not linger on the way to listen to squirrel, crow, or woodpecker, for Mrs. Bracken had promised them another jaunt to widow Donald's with

Tony Langford, who would be waiting for them at Lily Dell. Sally Van Zandt had gone with Nelly in the morning to the old woman's cottage to pass the day; and would return with Tony and his companions in the early evening.

"Let's hurry, Amy, I believe cousin Tony is waiting for us now," Lucy said, as she looked toward the house, while she held the meadow gate ajar for her sister to pass. Lightly their young feet bore them past the yellow locusts; and merrily their glad voices,—silvery avant-couriers,—went down on the wind to the white cottage that stood like the ghost of cherished memories amid the fading trees. Tony Langford sat on the front porch with Mrs. Bracken, waiting for them to come, and their joyousness infected his fine features with a happy gleam as they bounded over the bed of the brook that crossed the meadow near the old apple-tree. He started to meet them, for the way to widow Donald's led across the lawn as we have seen, and there was no need for them to climb the stile; but they sprang over, and begging him to wait just a minute, passed on with beaming faces still, but with subdued and quiet step, to the little parlor with a flower and an apple for the beloved sufferer within. Mabel had sufficiently recovered from her terrible illness to be able to leave her room; and every afternoon she sat for an hour in the parlor, where the prospect from the back window was most extended, giving a view of the distant woodlands in the region of the Glen Rock, and the long wheat-field, with its shining stubble and gleaming Golden-rod. She was sitting there when they entered; and in gentle, whispery tones they offered her their gifts, and went silently out to rejoin their escort,

and to shout again when they would reach the far-off heights. Light-hearted, though not unmindful ones! Wildly their young tears flowed like the June rain, when Lina's little apron was brought home without its wearer; wild and heart-rending were their screams, when, after the Elkhorn had been dragged for miles, they mournfully said no trace of the body could be found; and terrible were the dreams that frightened them in their fitful slumbers for a few succeeding nights. But the birds sung as gaily as ever, the flowers were bright and sweet, and the whole habitude of their life tended to efface from their hearts the sorrow which had settled like a mildew on their mother and sisters. They lived out of doors with Nature, and Lina was not missed by them there, inasmuch as they had seldom been with her either in field or wood. But about the house, where the traces of her busy hands still lingered, a shadow of gloom almost tangible to them seemed to hover, which was rendered more substantial by the altered features of their mother, and the pale, uncomplaining face of the gentle Mabel. Therefore their voices were hushed, and their gambolling feet stayed to sober, silent motion, whenever they passed through the lonely rooms, or into the presence of the lonelier occupants.

Mrs. Bracken looked after them as they passed down the smooth-trodden path. "See, Tony! don't they look like yellow butterflies!" Amy said, as a fitful gust blew a shower of locust leaves across their way. Like butterflies, the falling autumn leaves! Ay, for the heart stamps everything in nature with the images of its own experiences; and each leaf that brought up the memory of butterflies to the child, fell at the mother's feet close-

written with a melancholy lesson, telling of decay and grief, and the vanity of all earthly things.

Go out, oh stricken Viola Bracken, under the rustling cherry trees, and watch the sinking September sun paint with inimitable skill the windows of the cloud-cathedrals in the west. Look down the glen, and over the woods and fields. The purple elderberries are rare-ripe, but where are the hands that made from their pleasant nectar the rare and racy wine? Look at the old fruit-table there under the trees. It is waiting to receive its burthen; but the hands that gathered the downy plums, that nimbly pared the juicy apples, and placed their quarters, neatly cored, upon the clean, white boards,—where are they now? The grapes are heavy on the old elm tree that bends over the Glen Rock. Nelly and Lucy will climb the tree to gather them again; but they will not mimic the squirrels barking in the hickory trees, nor the woodpeckers hammering in the distant deadening; for the coarse tow-linen sheet to receive the purple bunches must be laid by other than the little dainty fingers that used to spread it on the long sword-grass under the tree.—Ay, listen! there is a sound like the breezy flow of garments, and the fall of busy feet upon the gallery floor. But it is only the rustle of the falling locust leaves, and the muffled dropping of the sweetbrier's scarlet berries. Do not weep. It is hard to bid thee seal up the bitter waters of thine anguish, but thy duty looketh to the living; and a pale, patient face even now is pressed against the reddening woodbine leaves at the window, and blue eyes, hoarding in their wells a silent sorrow, are gazing on thy quivering features. There is one who noteth every sparrow that falleth to the ground. Give the lost

up willingly to Him, and guard the young birds that are left. Fierce storms battle in the equinox, and if thy nest be not secured with the glue of vigilance and care, its treasures may be scattered to the winds.—

Tony and his companions met Sally Van Zandt and Nelly in the wood near Widow Donald's cottage. Sally said they had waited for them some time, but concluding they were not coming, had started homeward. Tony and Lucy turned to go back also; but Amy insisted upon going on to the house, unwilling to give up the projected visit. The old woman had always some dainty morsel on the clean shelves of her cupboard, and Amy was too fond of knick-knacks to disregard any opportunity for obtaining them. Tony and Lu went on with her, therefore, promising Nelly and her cousin, who sat down under a maple tree, to wait until their return, that they would be gone but a little while.

Nelly had not left Lily Dell since Lina's loss, until that day. The affliction which had come so suddenly upon the family had a strange and fearful effect on her. Made restless and nervous under the influence of Robert Blackburn's unhappy temperament, she was standing as it were on the threshold of a prison-house, from which there seemed no way of escape; and the awful mystery of her sister's disappearance unstrung all the energies of her young life, and threatened to shake her intellect also. She did not appear to mourn. A fixed, silent terror had taken the place of grief; and long, tremulous chills, like ague, succeeded by a stupor from which nothing could arouse her, filled the minds of the household with many forebodings. After several weeks had elapsed, and she had been induced to leave her mother's room, she strove

to resume her books and domestic labors; but a listlessness she could not drive away, stultified all effort, and a timidity she had never known before, took possession of her. She who had loved to go alone into the wide, lonely meadow-lands, at night, and watch the stars write in golden letters eloquent lessons, whose beautiful truth, though but half understood, filled her child-heart with an ecstasy of delight,—she who had loved to hide away in unfrequented nooks, and dream vague, nebulous dreams, unaccompanied save by whispering winds, and many-hued blossoms, crowned here and there with a halo of sunlight, sent down as a special benison through the leafy trees, where the very birds sung in lower cadences, so profound was the solitude,—she, once so fearless, now shivered at the falling of a leaf, and crouched in terror at sight of the white moonlight lying shattered under the dark, still trees. Every undefined object made her tremble as if she expected the dead to rise up before her; and after she had returned to her place in Mabel's bed, she would turn away at night and bury her head in her pillow, frightened at the look of the corpse-like face, so pale and death-serene, that lay beside her. When Sally went by for her in the morning, to go to Widow Donald's, the same dread came over her again. She felt afraid to go through the woods, over the red, rustling leaves. And then she had never been to the old woman's since Lina's loss, and everything connected with it would be brought up so vividly again. But a strange feeling,—as if the utterance of her fears would give them strength,—kept her from expressing her unwillingness to go, and with a sinking heart she walked beside her cousin along the changed September paths. The day passed pleasantly,

for Widow Donald was untiring in her efforts to woo the sufferer from her affliction, and Nelly's spirits were almost cheerful, until the time approached for her to return home.

"Lu and Amy will stay a long while at mother Donald's, I know, because she has cheese-cakes and cider," Sally said, as she tossed the dead leaves impatiently. Nelly sat watching the large brown leaves of a sycamore near them whirl rapidly in the circling gusts, or sink slowly, like fairy parachutes, to the ground.

"Come," Sally continued, "let's go to the Rattlesnake cove. They will call us when they come back, and we will be sure to hear them, for the wind blows that way."

"Oh no," Nelly entreated; "I would so much rather stay here." Her face wore a painful expression as she caught Sally's hand and looked around with a frightened tremor.

"You're so scary, Nelly, when there's nothing to fear," Sally said, half scolding, as she drew her cousin up from the ground where they had been sitting. "Come, let's go."

Nelly went with her; and calling Sancho, who was leaping and yelping around a beech-tree, to the great discomfiture of a squirrel on one of its topmost branches. Sally went singing merrily in the direction of the Rattlesnake cove, striving, though vainly, to arouse her cousin's spirits.

Tony and the children stayed longer at the cottage than they had intended. But the kitten Amy still claimed must be caressed by its mistress, and a dozen

questions asked about Bill, who had gone to Lexington to pursue his studies in the College during the winter. Amy listened with eager interest, and plied the old woman with queries so continuously, Tony could wait no longer for her to conclude them, but abruptly rose to go. He had scarcely risen when his attention was attracted out of doors; and the startled expression of his countenance made widow Donald and the children go to the entrance also. Nelly came flying toward them, with tossed hair and frantic looks. She leaped the stile at a bound, and came stumbling along until, exhausted, she sunk at the foot of the old catalpa tree, now bare and gray. Tony ran to raise her up, but the mad look in her eye was so fiery and repellant, he stood for a moment bewildered with anxiety.

"What is it, then, dear?" he said tenderly, as he laid his hand on her head. She looked in the direction of the cove, and tried to speak, but her lips were palsied.

"Where is Sally, Nelly?" he asked, while he bent over her and tried to read the meaning on her face. She gave a shrill, piercing scream, and fell over on the grass.

"Something has happened," he said to widow Donald, who with the children had followed him out of the house. "I will take her in, mother Donald, and go to look for Sally."

He lifted her light body,—so emaciated it scarcely looked identical with the plump little figure that sported in the shade of that same catalpa tree three months before,—and bore her to a couch in widow Donald's room. Then leaving her with the old woman, he hurried off toward the wood. Sally and Sancho were no where

to be seen, nor could he find any trace of them, though he searched the wood in every part. At last, after an hour's hunt, he thought of the cove, and flew thither. He leaped down the steep, narrow path to the brink of the river in fearless haste, and then pausing, strained his eyes up and down, and whistled loudly for his dog, knowing they could not have rambled far enough to be out of hearing. But there was no voice in reply, except the sharp discordant note of a solitary loon far down among the wild-gooseberry bushes that grew along the water's edge. He went round the cliff, and entering the rifted opening walked rapidly up to the cove. There they lay, Sally and the faithful dog, as if asleep. Sally was lying half bent on the ground beneath the petrified net-work, her head resting on her arm, and her white face seeming almost lustrous in contrast with the deep hue of her green merino sleeve. Sancho crouched at her feet, and a huge snake lay in a stiffened coil near him, with the prints of his teeth a few inches below its head. The dog's neck was swoln to twice its size, and his eyes were red and staring. One of Sally's feet was thrust out from the folds of her dress. There was a small dark stain on the white woollen stocking just above the slender boot, from which the flesh seemed ready to burst. Tony lifted her up, and called her in low, heart-broken tones; but she was dead, and the brave, beautiful beast beside her.

CHAPTER IX.

Come, you spirits,
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
And fill me from the crown to the toe, top-ful
Of direst cruelty!

MACBETH.

"ARE you quite sure it is Edgar Cameron, Rachel?"

"Yes, madam, I could never forget him. He read the burial-service over my mother," and the eyes of the young girl vainly strove to hold the swelling tears.

"Go, then; I will be down in a little while."

The girl left the room, and the next moment the door was locked on the inside, and the lady standing in the middle of the room. There was a malignant, desperate expression on her face, and a volume of meaning in the sneerful smile that clung about the corners of her compressed lips. She was very handsome. Her figure, of the middle height, was full and round, slightly tending to fatness; and the folds of her rich morning dress of crimson cashmere admirably revealed the turn of her fine falling shoulders. The robe, open in front, was confined at the waist by an embroidered sash of crimson satin; and her fair heaving bosom swelled beneath the thin cambric chemisette like the breast of some proud bird. Her eyes were black, and glittered with a light closely resembling the peculiar vari-colored gleam emitted from the eyes of some animals in the dark. The clear lift of her high white forehead was in strange contrast with the scowl about her brows and eye-lids, which no

affectation of serenity could soften; but if the heavy moreen curtain at the window had been withdrawn, it would have been seen that the hair which naturally grew so low on her forehead as to give it an expression of ferocity, was kept carefully plucked out, making that feature one third higher than its right. The rough, pimply skin, constantly irritated by this daily operation, was meliorated to the hue of the rest of her complexion by means of toilet powder. Her nose had the smooth Grecian outline, but there was a curl in the distended nostril, like that of a blood-hound; and those eyes of hers! fascinating and fiendish, yet at times dovelike and insinuating, they never looked out honestly and fairly, but glanced covertly from one corner when unobserved; and when detected, turned cunningly away, yet even then with a lazy indifference, perplexing and inscrutable.

Her hands, large and bony, clutched savagely at her girdle, as she began to pace the room. Her motions were very graceful, and her step was light as a kitten's; but her foot occasionally came down with a quick, sudden stamp, as if there might be the spring of a catamount in it. She walked rapidly up and down the elegant chamber, her robe flying back and revealing the fair white linen petticoat, which scarcely covered her large, ill-shapen feet, whose huge joints were but little softened by the gay-colored cloth slipper.

"I have it," she said at length, half aloud, as she paused before a large gilt-framed mirror over a toilet-table near the window, and untying the soft lace morning cap, began to brush her wavy black hair into shining curls over her forehead and cheeks. "I can make such

a plausible story he will never doubt its truth; and then we'll see what will follow."

Dora Berry had been left a penniless orphan when but two years old. She was taken into the family of a distant relative in Virginia, who removed to Louisville when she was six years old. Mr. Nash had a daughter near her own age; but being a man of limited means and not too capacious philanthropy, convinced himself he was not able to give the orphan such educational advantages as his own child received; and, therefore, while Anna Nash was sent to the best seminary in Richmond, Dora had only such instruction as the Louisville schools afforded. And this was ample, if she had had a right love of learning, and an honest desire to cultivate herself. Being, however, naturally ambitious for worldly distinction, and not a little envious, she brooded over her wrongs, as she considered them, and cherished a feeling of hatred toward her innocent foster-sister, sadly at variance with Anna's affection for herself. She was too wary, however, to manifest her ill-will in such a way as to make it apparent to Mr. Nash, for she well knew expulsion from his house would be the result. So she nursed her enmity in secret, until it colored her whole character, and extended itself to the meanest objects around her, and those farthest removed from her both by station and pursuit.

Anna was married shortly after her return from school to a man of mark and refinement; and Dora, who had striven with all her energies to make such an establishment for herself, finding her opportunities decreasing every day, at last married a gentleman considerably older than herself, and entirely different in every particu-

lar. He was a plain, unpretending farmer, of excellent practical sense, but without a shadow of ostentation, or love of display. He lived only a few years after their marriage; yet long enough to feel many a heart-ache on account of Dora's mischievous attempts to sow the seeds of discord in the family of the amiable woman who had been a sister indeed to her. Mr. Nash's family left Louisville, however, before Mr. Berry's death, and all intercourse ceased between them from that period. At the age of twenty-eight, Dora Berry was left a widow, with a dowry of two thousand dollars, all that remained of her husband's estate, the rest having been swallowed up by securities. What was she to do? The interest of her little fortune would scarcely pay her board, leaving nothing for what she considered more necessary almost than food, an elegant wardrobe. Mr. Berry had a brother, a man in comfortable and daily improving circumstances; but he lived in a plain, humble cottage out of town, and the home he promptly offered his widowed sister-in-law was curtly refused. She had scarcely deigned to notice his family in her husband's life, and now that she was free of the shackles she had worn with ill-concealed repugnance, she had no thought of continuing a relationship so much beneath her ambitious pride. Having an easy, fluent tongue, and an amount of tact almost inexhaustible, she found little difficulty in insinuating herself into families of the highest caste; but she rarely remained with any one of them longer than a few months, her malicious spirit betraying itself despite her artful efforts to disguise it. She had gone through her catalogue of friends when Mr. Oliver Berry, after well-deserved successes in business, par-

chased a beautiful house near the river, and fitted it up in a style almost princely for that period. Turning to his family again then, she made up a sad story about having had her feelings embittered towards them on account of the misrepresentations of Mr. Nash's family,—who were too far away now to hear of the falsehood she was telling,—and with the honest credulity of upright spirits, they believed all she said, and received her at once into their confidence and love.

Shortly afterward, Edgar Cameron arrived at Louisville from Virginia, on his way to the home of his uncle in Fayette. He had finished his course of preparation for the ministry, and was going to fill his uncle's place in the White Eagle church. Father Mahon had known the Berry's before they left Virginia, and Oliver Berry had been his agent in Louisville ever since his emigration to the West. Compelled to remain in Louisville several weeks to arrange some unsettled business, Edgar Cameron made the acquaintance of Mr. Berry's family, therefore; and his fine address and desirable prospects,—for Father Mahon had a considerable fortune in money in the hands of Mr. Berry, besides the pleasant cottage and farm near the White Eagle,—captivated the beautiful widow, and she set about decoying him into her snare. But she was not the person to enamour him, and he passed unhurt to the quiet neighborhood, where a true, pure heart awaited him.

Widow Donald had an only sister living in the outskirts of Louisville, who had been neighbor to Mr. Berry in the Old Dominion, and with whom his family still held friendly intercourse, notwithstanding their wide disparity of worldly condition. Edgar Cameron made her acquaint-

ance also, before he left Louisville; and after his departure with Edward Morton for the South, when Mabel went to visit the family of a friend near Louisville, and took with her presents and letters from Widow Donald to her sister, Mrs. Arnett's cordiality was by no means lessened when she read, from her sister's hand, that Mabel had been sought in marriage by the beloved young minister. Dora Berry had no acquaintance with the family Mabel was visiting, but met her occasionally at the residence of Mr. Blackburn, and the humble cottage of Mrs. Arnett. From the latter she learned the report of Mr. Cameron's preference for Mabel; and that day gave birth in her unhappy spirit to a malignity toward the sinless being for whom no one else ever had any but feelings of reverence and love. As she sat now before her table arranging her beautiful hair, the Arch-fiend himself must have gnashed his teeth with envy at the ingenuity of the hellish plot she was arranging against the suffering Mabel, lying on her humble bed at home, and whispering low comforting words to Nelly, while the rest of the family went to the burial of Sally Van Zandt; for Edgar Cameron reached Louisville the night after the occurrences related in the last chapter.

A triumphant gleam shot from her eyes as she arose from the toilet-table and carefully adjusted the rich folds of her robe; and as she tripped down the soft carpeted stairs, the brilliant widow of thirty-one might very well have passed for ten years younger; and no one could have suspected the difference between her age and Edgar Cameron's, though she was five years his senior. She glided through the drawing-room door with a careless air, humming a light, merry tune, but stopped suddenly

in the room as if struck aghast, and then darting forward again, seized Edgar Cameron's hands in both her own, and in a quivering voice exclaimed —

"Mr. Cameron! can it be? This is indeed like having the dead restored to us. But why did you not send up your name to my chamber? There I have been for the last half hour finishing a piece of work for the little orphans whose parents were burnt in the late fire, never once dreaming you were here,—for we thought you were dead," she continued sorrowfully, "and imagining the visitor Rachel announced was some one of the many who come, whom I can scarcely tolerate, I loitered and, I fear, behaved badly, and pouted too," and she looked up with the arch half-mischievous look of a troubled, petted child.

"I did send my name by Rachel," he replied, "and have felt impatient for you to come, for you may perhaps be able to give me some intelligence of the facts connected with Mrs. Morton's death, of which your brother-in-law has just informed me."

"You have seen him, then?" she asked.

"Yes, and he told me of my uncle's sudden death, and the self-destruction of Lina Morton shortly after, when she heard of the death of her husband."

"Did he tell you nothing further?"

"No. As you are aware, he had no acquaintance with Mrs. Bracken's family, and heard only of Lina's death through a business letter from Mr. Van Zandt, wherein he sends to Mr. Berry, as executor to my uncle's will, the deed to the cottage and farm he had bequeathed to Edward and myself; giving as his reason for doing so, the disappearance and suicide of Edward's widow,

when the news of her husband's death reached her. I would have gone on last night, but I am much fatigued, having just recovered from a distressing illness. The news of these afflictions has come upon me so suddenly, I have felt feverish with anxiety to know the full particulars; and in the absence of Mrs. Arnett, who, Mr. Berry tells me, is gone to Fayette on a visit, I have come to you, in the hope that you may have learnt something from her before her departure, relative to the manner of poor Lina's death. Can you tell me?" he continued, for she seemed to hesitate. "Can you tell me any thing of her mother's family, or of—of Mabel?"

Dora Berry covered her face with her hands, and sobbed aloud. "Oh, that this bitter trial might have been spared me," she said, as she lifted her head and pressed a soft thin handkerchief to her eyes. "It seems my peculiar lot to be forced to inflict pain upon those whom of all others I would spare the slightest pang."

"I do not understand you, Mrs. Berry," Edgar Cameron replied. "If any thing has befallen Mabel, tell me what it is. She is my promised wife."

"I have not seen Mrs. Arnett," Mrs. Berry said at last, "since the men returned who went with Mr. Morton and yourself to New Orleans. But I have heard from her frequently, through Rachel Hunt, whose mother, you know, died at her house. Mrs. Arnett went to Fayette several weeks since; but she told Rachel before she left of the terrible tragedies that have wrecked the happy family you left at Lily Dell six months ago." She paused again, as if too much agitated to go on.

"Do not stop," he entreated, "tell me, Mrs. Berry, all you have heard."

"Mabel Bracken is dead, Mr. Cameron," she said, without lifting her eyes. "After Mrs. Morton's death she ruptured a blood-vessel, and died in a few weeks. Mrs. Bracken, heart-broken, sold her farm to Mr. Van Zandt, and went to Virginia to the old homestead she left twenty years ago."

When she looked up, the leering devil was driven from her face for a moment, by a shade of remorse as she saw the pale, agonized features of her auditor; but assuming again the soft, troubled look, and in a tone as mellow as her voice could utter,—for it had always a brazen, nasal twang no elocution could overcome,—she murmured, as she laid her hand on his cold, clammy fingers, "the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away. Oh, may He give you grace to say, Blessed be His name."

"Mabel, my Mabel," at last broke from his lips. "You do not know how I loved her; you do not, you cannot know how bereft and miserable I am." He leaned his head on the sofa cushions, and groaned aloud.

"I do not know, Mr. Cameron?" she said. "I, who have been a poor weed cast away on Life's turbulent sea, without soil or sunshine, yet oh! I do believe, with the germ of a perfect flower in my neglected being. Unsay those cruel words, and let me believe there is one human soul alive to the capacities of a nature never yet sufficiently prized to be analyzed."

He looked at her in pity and astonishment. "Your's must have been a lonely lot indeed," he said kindly, forgetting his grief in the contemplation of the insoluble riddle of sorrow, or deceit, or desperation, or all three together, that wove its net over her agitated features. "There are misfortunes greater than I have experienced,

I know; but there is one way to make life peaceful, if not joyous, and to bring the clear sunshine of heaven to penetrate the murkiest atmosphere. The only true content is the twin-sister of unfaltering rectitude; and unless we woo the one, we will never win the other."

"I have been more than once comforted by the truth of what you say," she replied. "But in the midst of severe persecutions, I have been prone to despond at times, and to forget the promises of Him who said, 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.' How deeply at such seasons have I felt the need of a friend to comfort and encourage me! But you have been restored to us,—to the church again, I mean," she continued, with well-dissembled confusion, "and I hope to learn many lessons from you in regard to the Christian life."

"Never again from me," he said; "I cannot remain so near the scene of the deepest trial I ever suffered. There are broad fields of usefulness in the South, where the harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. I will return thither, and strive by constant activity to blunt the two-edged sword of this most searching sorrow."

"You do not mean to leave us again?"

"I shall go straightway. My life was saved by a party of Cherokees in Tennessee, to whom I promised to return. But I little dreamed I should go back so soon, and alone." He arose to go.

"Are you not over-hasty?" she asked. "Had you not better go to Richmond and see Mrs. Bracken herself? She could tell you so much more than any one else can, about the last hours of the one you loved so dearly."

Her manner seemed very kind and earnest, but he replied, "No. Such an interview would only harrow our

hearts the more, and I can learn all from her by letter. Besides, I have an Indian youth in my charge who was sent with me to receive an English education at the Indian Academy in Scott county. I promised to watch over him constantly during his stay, and to take him back to the tribe at the end of a year. We will return at once; for there is nothing to keep me here now, and I shall feel restless and unhappy till my labors begin. Farewell, Mrs. Berry. Present my regards to your brother's family, and my kindest remembrance to Mrs. Arnett and Rachel Hunt. God will bless and watch over them always, for they are worthy."

"And have you no kind words for me?"

He looked at her curiously: "May you be happy always in proportion to your merits," he said slowly, and left the room, unable to comprehend the strange woman whose peculiar humors he had often noticed, but of whose deep-dyed wickedness he had never dreamed. The sound of his feeble footsteps on the pavé came up through the half-closed windows like a leaden rebuke to the spirit of the baffled, brilliant creature who sat crouched on the sofa like a glittering basilisk, ready to gnash her teeth with rage that the issue of the game she had played had been so different from her anticipations. It was a rational speculation, she thought,—founded on the scheme she was concocting as she paced her room an hour before,—that after she had told of Mabel's death, he would start at once, without further enquiry, to Richmond; for she knew the impetuosity of his nature, and that his feelings would drown out all memory of other matters. Then it would be quite easy to tell Rachel Hunt that Edgar Cameron, who had returned

safe and sound, had gone on to Virginia to be married. Rachel in turn would tell Mrs. Arnett, through whom the story would soon be communicated to Widow Donald, and reach the ears of the suffering Mabel, so as to bring about her death before Cameron could return from Virginia. Then, when the falsehood should be discovered, it would be a small matter to cast the whole of it on Rachel Hunt; and a well-assumed show of integrity would finish the matter, and secure to her the prize she still coveted. But the flimsy plot had failed utterly; and disappointment and fear of detection gave her a savage daring, fearful to witness. She had thrown herself into a snare from which extrication would be difficult; and she trembled from head to foot as she fled from the drawing-room, about an hour after Cameron's departure, at the sound of Mr. Berry's feet on the gallery before the house. Before she went, however, she discovered a small bundle on the sofa, and a gold pencil-case, which she seized eagerly and bore away to her chamber.

Mr. Berry and his wife and Rachel Hunt were seated at the table when Dora Berry entered the dining-room.

"What has become of Mr. Cameron, Dora?" her brother asked, as she took her seat. "He promised he would remain with us till to-morrow, and bring up his Indian ward from the Big Ball Tavern after preparing you all to receive him; but Sarah tells me he has been gone some time."

"He had not heard of Miss Mabel Bracken's death until I told him," she said, "and he determined at once to return to the Indians who saved his life. He told me to tell you all good-bye, for he would leave Louisville this afternoon with the Indian boy."

She glanced at Rachel Hunt, who was gazing at her with a look of surprise and grief. "Is Miss Mabel dead?" the girl asked timidly, while her eyes filled with tears.

"Rachel! you astonish me!" Dora Berry exclaimed. "It has not been a month since you told me she died, a few weeks after Mrs. Morton's disappearance, and that her mother had removed to Virginia."

Rachel sat for some time as if spell-bound. "It must have been some one else," she said at last in a half-whisper, that could scarcely find its way through her pallid lips. "It must have been some one else. Miss Mabel is not dead."

"You know very well, Rachel, you told me all about it, even to the minutest circumstance," Mrs. Berry replied; "and I cannot express my surprise that you can have the audacity to deny it."

Rachel's eyes were dry, and a crimson spot was slowly deepening in her cheek. She left the table, and went to Dora Berry's side.

"Please, Miss Dora, please don't say it any more," she said. "It was somebody else, oh, it was not I; I could not say so false a thing, and—"

"Not one word more, Rachel. You can feign innocence very well, but it is too late to practise any more of your arts on me," Mrs. Berry replied, in a tone of injured dignity.

Rachel Hunt looked her full in the face. "I did not say it," she said in a firm voice, "and you know it!"

"Go to your room, girl!" Mr. Berry exclaimed, "you forget yourself, surely. It is not my custom to listen to liars."

Rachel started to the door, and opened it half-way.

The sun came in and fell searchingly athwart her figure, as she stood there in her plain mourning dress. Then looking for a moment at the faces which surveyed her as if she had been some loathsome thing, she walked slowly out.

"I begin to feel the truth of what you have been warning me against, Dora," Mrs. Berry said, after Rachel had left the room. "But it's very strange she can put on such an innocent look. I can't understand it."

"You have never been thrown with so many different characters as I have, Sarah," she replied. "There are all sorts of people in this world; and I have told you more than once, when you have spoken of Rachel's unpretending worth, that you had better be on your guard. One may be so artful as to appear artless."

"I believe you are right," Mr. Berry joined. "I never expected to hear that girl tell such an arrant lie when I took her from old Mrs. Arnett, and gave her a place in my family. I shall start her back in a hurry though, now that I know what she is."

"Do not be hasty," Dora said in a patronizing tone. "Rachel is young, and though full of glaring faults, may yet be brought to a better course of life by the proper means. If I were you, I would not turn her off, but by keeping a strict watch over her, and never neglecting to admonish her severely for all departures from right, I would strive to bring about a better state of things; and surely there is much room for improvement," she continued, as she sadly shook her head.

"You are too good, Dora," Mrs. Berry said. "I

don't see how you could sit still and let her call you a story-teller. I would not have borne it."

"It is hard to take such things, I know, Sarah," she replied; "but I have had so many trials I can bear almost anything," and the delicate kerchief was again brought into service. Wiping her eyes hastily, however, she said: "I wonder if Mr. Cameron can have left Louisville yet? We must try to find him, and bring him face to face with that poor wicked girl."

"I will go at once to seek him," Mr. Berry said, as he bustled from the table to get his hat.

"A few minutes' delay will make but little difference, brother," Dora suggested, "and if you please, I desire now to say all that is necessary about Rachel, so that this painful subject may end." Mr. Berry resumed his seat.

"I had hoped," she continued, "that I might never have to say more to you than could be couched in a simple warning; but the present occurrences have convinced me it is my duty to tell you plainly what Rachel Hunt is, that you may know precisely how to deal with her. But you must first promise me you will not cast her off, for she is an orphan." They promised; but told her,—simple-minded pair!—it was for her sake alone.

Then commenced a narration of failings and sins it would be painful to detail; and for two hours, lie after lie crawled through Dora Berry's lips, full-grown and loathsome as the lice of Egypt. Mr. Berry became so interested in her disclosures, he did not notice the lateness of the hour till Dora,—knowing Cameron had had time to get far enough away from town,—sprang

suddenly up and exclaimed: "But I have kept you longer than I meant. Still it is not too late to find him, and let him know how I have been innocently led to deceive him."

"I will go," Mr. Berry said, "but I feel sorely tempted to turn that girl out, first."

"You have promised me you will not, though," she said appealingly. "You go now to look for Mr. Cameron, and I will go to Rachel's room, and try to induce her to tell the truth."

He left the room, and Dora started up stairs, ostensibly to go to Rachel's room, but really to get away to her own, to rejoice in secret over her successful escape from this difficulty. She remained there until it was quite dark, when hearing Mrs. Berry call to Rachel from the foot of the stairs, she went from her room and looked in at Rachel's door. But the girl was not there. Dora went below.

"I have been looking for Rachel through all the rooms," she said, "but she is not in the house."

Mrs. Berry called a servant to go and search again, thinking she might be occupied in some out-of-the-way corner, as was her frequent habit; and she and Dora seated themselves by the parlor fire just as Mr. Berry entered.

"I was too late," he said. "Cameron has been gone several hours."

Dora looked perplexed. "It is so hard to decide how to act," she said.

"Did Mr. Cameron tell you what tribe of Indians saved him?" Mr. Berry asked. "If we knew where he intended to go, we might head him with a letter."

"He was saved on the Arkansas river by a party of Osages, who took him up the river some distance, but I forget where," she said. The falsehood was uttered as glibly as if a map of the country had been spread before her. She knew if she told he was going to the Cherokees, who had brothers and sons at the Indian school, it would be easy to communicate with him through them, and this would frustrate the plan she was re-constructing.

"He told me about those Indians," Mr. Berry said, "but I was busy counting out his money at the time, and didn't pay much attention. I hope the fellow won't be robbed on the way. Five thousand dollars is a snug little sum for a highwayman to pounce upon, and Cameron is so much like a girl he would as lief carry it in his hand as any other way."

"Did he say anything about the disposal of his farm and the parsonage in Fayette?" Dora enquired.

"Not particularly. He said he would make some arrangement about them after his return from Fayette. Oh, he will go on to Lexington. He is not such a simpleton as to go back to the Indians with all this nice property lying idle. You see if we don't hear of him before another month. He feels troubled, I know; but he'll remember business for all that."

"I have just been thinking," Dora said, "how we might spare that poor sinning girl. Edgar may indeed, as you say, have gone on to Fayette. If so, he will learn the truth; and in the meantime I would not, if I were you, mention the possibility of his having gone back to the Indians. He told you he meant to go to Fayette, and though he told me he had changed his

mind, you needn't tell that. Let it be, then, that he has gone on as he first intended, and there the matter can rest."

Mr. Berry was puzzled. He was a blunt, straightforward man, and anything like shirking made him wince. But Dora was so earnest in her assertions that it was all to spare Rachel Hunt, he agreed to do as she said, though he could not see for his life how Rachel was to be benefited by it.

Where, all this time, was Rachel Hunt?

She had left the dining-room in an insanity of grief, but not grief for herself. She had been misrepresented by Dora Berry before, yet no impression seemed to have been made thereby upon the kind hearts of her protectors; and with a quiet reliance upon the integrity of her life to bring her safely through the petty tangles thrown around her by the beautiful, wicked intriguer, she was cheerful and content, though she often felt lost and strange. She had no companionship in Mr. Berry's family. Her strong, clear mind had been as well cultivated as the few leisure hours of her dying mother permitted; and through the five years before Mrs. Hunt's death her only joy was her child's rapid improvement. Thus a yearning after life's highest aims was developed in the girl's soul, which, though it enabled her to pass by many of the prickly hedges of the world unmindful of their thorns, made her often feel how real was her isolation from all around her.

Gregory Hunt emigrated with his wife and daughter to the West when Rachel was but eleven years old. He lost his fortune in Boston, and went to the Ohio to endeavor, by the practice of law, to give his family a

home as lovely and well-appointed as the one which fast succeeding misfortunes had wrested from them in New England. He had but little means left after their arrival in Louisville; and before they had been there a week he was fatally attacked by winter fever. On the day of his death, he and his family were found by Mrs. Arnett, perishing with hunger and cold. Out of her scant means the old woman paid the burial expenses, and then took the mother and child to her house. Mrs. Hunt taught a school until her health was completely undermined by a consumption she inherited from her father's family, and she died, as has been related, a few weeks after Edgar Cameron's first arrival in Louisville. Rachel had no associates. Shy and shrinking, and feeling keenly the change in her worldly condition, she could not brook the sneers of the coarse boys and girls that attended her mother's school, who picked at her patches, and called her Dame Arnett's pauper. Her mother was her only confidant and playmate; for though she loved Mrs. Arnett tenderly, the old woman was untutored and common-place, and felt little interest,—however great her admiration might be,—for the intellectual industry of the young orphan. When her mother died, therefore, it seemed as if there was no earthly comfort left her. Edgar Cameron had gone frequently to see Mrs. Hunt, of whose sorrows and privations Mrs. Arnett had spoken freely to him. He was called upon, therefore, to perform the last religious rites over her dead body; and his sincere, child-like sympathy, as he sat beside the broken-hearted girl, after the clouds had been heaped on her mother's coffin, and they had returned to the death-darkened room at home, made an impression no change

of any kind might ever efface. Day after day he sought her during his brief stay, pouring with all a Christian's singleness of purpose, the Balm of Gilead into her gaping wounds; but never once imagining a love for himself was springing up in her heart, which would be the source of so much misery to both.

Rachel had not seen him from that time. He went with Edward Morton to New Orleans, as she had heard Mr. Berry say, and then in June came the terrible news of their loss. She was at the breakfast-table when Mr. Berry related the story as brought by the hired men, but she stirred not a muscle, and sat apparently as much composed as if she had never heard his name before. Yet oh! the sickening anguish at her heart's core! If she might only get away to herself. But no. Dora Berry, whose lynx-eyes had caught the pallor that covered her features when the news was announced, kept after her like her shadow through the day, never giving her one moment to indulge the feelings so painfully pent up. But the calm, comforting night came at last, and crouching in the farthest corner of her little room, the uncommunicative and but half-understood orphan moaned aloud in her wretchedness.

She would have shrieked, or died, if she had heard the door softly opened by huge, bony fingers, that looked like a satyr's, as the dim lamp-light brought into hideous distinctness their magnified outlines, or had caught one glimpse of the fascinating face peering in, despoiled of all beauty now by its exulting malignity.

Day after day her accustomed duties were done. Night after night she sat with the members of the family, as had been her custom, until the evening worship was per-

formed according to the ritual of a dissenting church,—having no privacy, and silently striving to conform, outwardly at least, to circumstances wherein there was so little in consonance with her refined nature.

At last Edgar Cameron returned, and it was her lot to be at the door when he entered. The blood rushed to her face, making her feet stagger, as he clasped her cold hands, and looked into her eyes with the kind gentleness of old; but though he noticed her startled, half-crazy look, he attributed it to the memory of her mother, which his presence recalled, for she could not find utterance to tell him she had believed him dead. And when he asked for Dora Berry, she gladly escaped from him, to offer up her wild gratitude that he still lived; for though she knew he loved Mabel, and that she would soon be his wife, she still rejoiced that he was alive, and rejoiced on her own account. Her joy was neither for himself nor Mabel; but the single consequence of the idolatrous love she bore him, and which no condition in his life or hers could ever in the least degree abate. Her deep, silent, unimpetuous nature, having no hatreds and but few attachments, was incited therefore to few purposes in life beyond the simple performance of duty; and even this was done so unobtrusively, the merit of well-doing was scarcely imputed to her. Not that she seemed laggard. There was no alacrity about her, in anything; but a steady, quiet industry characterized all her actions, to the few who noticed her at all. To the rest she seemed a cipher, or if anything else, impenetrable. Yet she was undisguised in speech and conduct; but her soul was like the sea, clear and pure, yet by its very depth appearing dim and intranslucent. There was one spot in its lonely

waste, however, where, as in the calm lakes hemmed in by the mighty coral-workers, the fairest flowers and rarest shells and gems were gleaming safe from any tempest that might toss the outer deep,—one spot secured by the strong bulwark of her unostentatious, but unconquerable aspirations,—her love for Edgar Cameron. It had been the one thought of her life, after her mother's death; and when the news of his loss came, she walked like some half-crazed somnambulist, doing even her religious duties as if she were a machine rather than an immortal. But he returned,—he was not dead; and as she went from the drawing-room to bear his message to the young widow in her room, though she uttered no sound, the hallelujahs of her spirit must have gone like a jubilee to the very gates of heaven.

She was not near him again during his stay. But she knew he would come back, for he had told her when she left him, he had many things both to tell and to ask her. She entered the dining-room, therefore, with a serene spirit, and listened eagerly to every word uttered by Dora and her brother, until the former made that most astounding assertion. She stood, as I have said, a moment in the door, looking with a searching gaze at the faces before her. But there was no thought of self in her mind. One single object was rising up before her,—one only isolated aim,—and shelter and food, and friends and enemies, were alike forgotten in the resolve to pursue it. She turned into the street, bareheaded and unwrapped, and the chill September air searched her very vitals, as she passed with the silence and speed of thought along the unthronged streets leading to the Big Ball Tavern. She would go after Edgar Cameron,—she would go to

the end of the world to seek and tell him the truth, or die in the attempt. There were few persons in the paths as she went along, and she had been so seldom in that part of the town, but few, if they had seen, would have recognized her. She reached the tavern just after the diners had dispersed, and was told that Edgar Cameron had left, with the young Indian, only a half hour before, and had taken the "Wilderness Road." For the first time in her life Rachel started at the gloomy significance of the name; but with a half-uttered prayer she darted on, and ran mile after mile, until she passed far out of the settlements into the thick woods, where the road was known only by the blazed trees. She saw no trace of him, however, until just as the sun was setting, when she discerned two horsemen far ahead, riding slowly along the bank of a little stream. She strained her wild, delirious eyes, and flew on with a cry of joy, for she recognized an Indian dress on one of the riders, and love's quick perception identified the other. Fatigue and loneliness and danger were alike forgotten, and she called to him with all the strength left her, while she stumbled along over brush and briars and stones, dead to everything but the one effort to recall him.

"Edgar, dear Edgar!" she cried, "you must not, you cannot go away!" and a shriek so piercing it might have been seen almost to cleave the heavens, echoed through the frowning wilderness. The men reined in their horses,—she could see their heads above a swell of land that intervened, and gathering her failing strength, she ran with quickened speed and called again, but they were out of sight. Looking before and around her, she discovered two roads branching from the one she had been so

wildly travelling. "Edgar, dear Edgar!" she cried again; but there was no reply except from the hooting owls in the trees above her, and no sight but the black night coming down.

About midnight that night, a wagon drawn by six stout mules, and laden with wheat, came slowly through the opening leading to the left. It was covered, and in front two persons were seated, while a stout negro rode one of the lead-horses. As they passed into the main road, the horses suddenly shied; and the driver, discovering some object in the road, called to the man inside, requesting him to get out and see what it might be.

"Let me get out too, Tom," said the woman who sat beside him. "The moon is coming up, I see, and I am so tired I believe I want to walk a bit, anyhow."

Tom Carper assisted Mrs. Arnett to alight, and she went with him to see what had occasioned the horse's fright. There was a dark heap lying in the road, just where the wagon should have gone. Tom and his companion drew nearer.

"'Tis a bundle of dry-goods some traveller has lost," Tom Carper said, as he stooped to lift it from the ground. But he had scarcely touched it when a low moan came up from the sombre folds of the black dress; and lifting the feeble, almost lifeless figure, they recognized the pale, senseless features of Rachel Hunt.

CHAPTER X.

Thank God, bless God, all ye who suffer not
More grief than ye can weep for!

BROWNING.

"Do you love him, Nelly?"

There was a sorrowful meaning in the tones of Mabel Bracken's voice as she looked into the innocent, upturned eyes of the young creature who sat beside her. The green shadows of the drooping grape-vines that fell from the old elm-tree almost to the edge of the gray stone where they were sitting, gave an unearthly whiteness to her features, so thin and almost transparent now; for the three long years of sorrow and suffering had proven a searching crucible; and her pure spirit's radiance seemed to shine through the very flesh, so nearly ethereal had it grown. "Do you love him, Nelly?"

"Yes, Mabel. But you have not looked at the elegant gift he brought me," Nelly said, as she lifted a costly book from her lap, and laid it on her sister's knee.

Mabel turned the brilliant leaves. It was a collection of fine sketches of European scenery. How fresh and glad Nelly's bright face looked, as she watched every change on her sister's features, eagerly waiting for the praise to be bestowed on the generous giver, which her young heart considered his meed. She had grown very much in the past three years. The melancholy induced by the frightful bereavements that had scourged two happy households, had gradually worn away, and joyous

hopes, like opening blossoms, clustered about her soul again, and filled all her being with their flush and fragrance. Nay, not all, Mabel thought, as she gazed into the clear, amber eyes still upturned to hers, and saw again the deep sober meaning below their lustre, that told of an inner life undiscovered yet, even by its unconscious possessor. She had grown much indeed; but the child of twelve was the same child at fifteen, changed only in that the intensity of her impulses had deepened, and her affections grown more and more confiding. For hers was a heart which, though it might live in the world forever, and receive all the wounds inflicted by Treachery and Deceit, and wrong of every grade, could never learn to be distrustful; but living solely in the affections, must seek, when its tide of Love was thrown back by mountain walls of Indifference or Hate, which its gentle waves failed to penetrate, other channels for their inexhaustible flow. She could never have lived alone. No dove cooed in the early spring days that she did not call Amy, or Lu, or Jane, even if the others would not come, to hear; and though her little sisters made sport of her fancies, she could not keep them to herself, nor remember that half her associates would never read a tithe of her feelings. She was born an enthusiast, in the highest meaning of the word. Every thing she undertook engrossed her whole heart; and by reason of the trustfulness of her nature, each pursuit and enjoyment was shorn of half its value if not shared with others. If she had been left in the world without human companionship, she would have learnt the language of beast and bird, and breathed her soul's divinest secrets to waterfall, and flower, and star. The only misery she had ever known,

—for her bereavements were sanctified afflictions,—had been caused by Robert Blackburn's peculiar power over her; but this was more a reflex of his own strange temperament, than a direct, intentional influence; and though it made her often unhappy, the main tenor of her life was not only serene, but joyous.

Mabel watched the enquiring eyes till the delicate lips parted, and the question they could no longer keep a captive came forth.

"Is he not good, Mabel? I could never have learnt half so much of those wonderful places from mere description; as these pictures have taught me. And see how prettily he has written his name in the tower of the Strasburg cathedral," she continued, pointing to the fine frontispiece. "How beautiful the name looks,—ROBERT BLACKBURN. I always liked it, but so much more now," and the tones of her voice sunk lower and lower, while the peach-bloom on her cheek deepened to a summer rose-tint.

"Does he ever talk to you about all these beautiful places, Nelly?"

"No. He says he would rather see me look at them, than to say one word to me," she replied. "But that seems so strange, Mabel. I love to ask him questions, but he never will talk to me. He says he can converse with any one better than with me, because he loves me, and is happiest to sit by me without speaking. I wish I could understand why. What is the reason, do you reckon?"

"I cannot say," Mabel answered, as she stroked the long light curls from the smooth forehead of the child, and feebly rose to go. She did not say, "I cannot

think," for she had been thinking much since Robert Blackburn came, two weeks before. One circumstance connected with his first visit to Lily Dell had given her an insight into his character, which, coupled with traits she could not admire, made her tremble at his evident desire to secure the affections of her sister. The week after Lina's disappearance, she had found in the little room Robert occupied, the prayer he had delivered with such evident agony in Nelly's hearing; and she inferred he had committed it to memory expressly for the occasion, or copied it afterward, which was scarcely better. This, and other things giving evidence of a premeditated employment of the holiest feelings to the accomplishment of selfish and ignoble purposes, were as windows to the rest of his character, revealing much within which she thought would justify her in advising Nelly to be cautious how she made promises to him. It was for this she had consented to try the walk to the Glen Rock, a distance she had never essayed since Lina's loss. But the simple, child-like manner of her sister told so plainly that no slightest dream of such a course had ever crossed her mind, Mabel hesitated, dreading what might be its consequence to a soul as sensitive and vital as hers. So with the compassion of a heart that had never fostered a harshness, she concluded to wait, and by mere allusions prepare her for the lesson her judgment as well as her affections taught her the child had yet to learn.

They left the Glen Rock and started homeward, for the dew would soon be falling, and Mabel was too frail to risk its damp. The voices of the negroes returning from the far-off corn-fields floated pleasantly through the pulseless air. The cherry birds darted in and out among

the elder-bushes like truant flecks of sunlight; and a single robin, clear-voiced muezzin, chanted the vesper-hour in a reddening maple by the hemp-field. There was no moving of leaves, save those of the quivering aspen-trees near the orchard; and far away beyond the White Eagle, the July sunset flooded the sky with its topaz sea, while stretching southward along the horizon, with purple keel and snowy sail, the cloud-ships lay becalmed. It was an hour which none but the suffering and thoughtful ever regard. There were no gorgeous sunset palaces, there was no rush of revelling winds, nor sound of busy labor.

"Nature with folded hands seemed there,
Kneeling at her evening prayer,"

while the purpling sky bent over all like a parent's benediction. Ay, pause, Mabel Bracken, for a foot like thine may never walk idly when the great gates of eternity thus swing on their silent hinges, revealing the peaceful white-blooming fields of heaven. She stepped in "the shade of the maple.

"Go on to the house, Nelly," she said, "and tell mother I will not stay here long."

"Nelly looked at her wistfully, as if more than half tempted to beg leave to remain with her; but there were times when it seemed necessary to Mabel's comfort not only, but her very existence, to be left alone with Nature; and she passed reluctantly on. Mabel sat down under the tree where the robin still piped his liquid cadences; but her thoughts were turned from the sweet influences of the outer world, and a look of painful anxiety made the sign of the cross on her usually peaceful forehead.

Nelly entered the orchard gate just as Robert Blackburn with his shot-gun leaped the fence dividing the wood from the harvest-field. He caught a gleam of her dress as she passed under the aspen tree, and was hurrying on to overtake her, when Mabel's low voice arrested him.

"I want to speak with you a moment, Robert," she said, as he turned and came toward her with a look of curiosity.

"Well, Mabel." He was sitting by her side.

"Do you mean to make my sister your wife, Robert?"

"Why do you ask me such a question, Mabel? Have I not said I never knew what it was to love, except once before,"—and he looked at her with a sad smile,—“until I saw Nelly Bracken two months ago?"

"Did you not say the same to Sarah Miller last summer, except that you made *no* reservation then; and when Amelia Willard won your affections from her, did you not break the engagement you had made? The treatment you received at the hands of the heartless coquette, was a fit return for your causeless cruelty to the true-hearted girl who trusted you."

"Do not be severe, Mabel," he said in a persuasive tone. "You do not know why I broke my engagement with Sarah Miller,—I have never told, I will never tell, the reason. It is enough for me to say she proved unworthy. You are surprised, I know," he continued, mournfully, as the clear, startled eyes of his listener searched his face, "but I cannot let you remain under the impression that the betrothed of your sister is dishonorable. I do not ask you to believe what I have said. I have faults you have doubtless discovered, and they have led you to construe unfortunate circumstances which

have entangled me, into derelictions from the path of uprightness. I have too much pride to disgrace myself by making a vindication where there should be no accusation, and have given this simple statement merely to satisfy your fears. Time will show clearly enough what I am."

There was a show of integrity in his manner which Mabel could not doubt, and an evidence of undeserved reproof in his features that made her feel ashamed she had mentioned the subject.

"I am satisfied," she said, "and beg your full forgiveness, not only for doubting you, but for detaining you so long from her."

He kissed her forehead, and started to the house; but before he had gone many paces, a low moan caused him to turn quickly round, and he saw her lying on the damp grass, white and still as the clouds above her. He lifted her in his arms and bore her to the cottage. Mrs. Bracken was not surprised, for Mabel had frequent fainting fits; and as soon as the usual restoratives had wrought their work, and the blue eyes looked out again from their transparent parted lids, she chid her for taking so long a walk, and remaining so late in the evening air. "You must be more careful hereafter, Mabel, if you wish to recover," she said. But after several days had passed, and the sufferer still lay weak and silent, Mrs. Bracken felt a heavy warning, as if the delicate web of her child's life were broken.

They were sitting,—Nelly, her mother, and Robert,—by Mabel's bed one afternoon, when she awoke from a deep sleep, and gazed full into her mother's face.

"Come nearer, mother," she said, "I want to tell you all about it."

Mrs. Bracken took her wasted hand with an anxious look. "It has been so long, so very long to wait, mother," she said. "At first I thought I would die; but I looked at you, and remembering how wretched you were without her, I hid my own grief, and strove to be happy and busy, to fill her place, as far as I could. And then the hope that he was not dead,—that he would still come, gave me all the life I have had through these three long years. And mother, I believe he will come yet,—I am sure he is not dead, though I shall not see him. Tell him how I prayed for him, till I myself became a living prayer; and how, though 'hope deferred' was wearing my heart away, I struggled with my sorrow and my weakness, striving to dig from the dry paths of duty a little rill of comfort. Tell him how I have lain awake at night, recalling all his beautiful, holy lessons, and asking God to fasten them every one in my heart, so that while I was preparing for the Eternal Life, I might be the better fitted, if he should return, to walk by his side in this. I have besought the Lord to let me know whether he were alive or dead, that this sickening heart-sorrow might be quieted at least; and my prayer is soon to be answered, mother, though not in the way I thought. I am going away, but not too soon, for my time of usefulness is ended. I have taught Nelly all I could in my failing health; but her quick intellect has seized by intuition truths I labored to obtain, and she is my superior now. She will more than supply my place, not only in the instruction of the children, but in the many household duties I could not share with you; and you, dear mother,—you will not be troubled to look after my comfort any more, and you will be happy, knowing that

I am where the only dew that falls is the blessing of the Most High, where the Tree of Life is growing with its balmy leaves of healing, and where there are no rugged defiles of Poverty with their circumscribed horizon, keeping back eager feet that essay to clamber to the loftiest heights of Truth, where the glory of the God of Immensity shines unclouded and eternal."

Mrs. Bracken's frame shook as she listened to Mabel's voice,—so sorrowful when she alluded to the sorrows they had endured, so triumphant and clear as she spoke of the Life to come; and her conscience was smitten by the piercing rebuke unconsciously given by her dying child. She had been compelled to struggle hard since the death of her husband, and had grown at times irritable and impatient; for say what we will about the blessings of Poverty, and its quiet exemption from the temptations and snares that hedge in the lives of the rich, it requires a soul not only God-like, but almost superhuman, after knowing nothing but the comforts of affluence, to be happy with the merest necessities of the plainest living. It might be easier to bear, if the only loss were the loss of wealth. But the pecuniarily unfortunate, however honorable and cultivated, are deprived not only of the luxuries gold always commands, but must likewise renounce, or be renounced by, friends who were most ardent in better days, and receive not only their indifference and sneers, but be defenceless against the advances of persons of inferior grades, who, though good enough in their way, cannot be received upon the level of equality, and become, therefore, indignant and impertinent. All these things Mrs. Bracken had borne, and her temper had been soured, less, perhaps, than many

others might have been, but still enough to inflict many a wound on the heart of the sensitive Mabel. She was very industrious and thrifty, too, and had always enjoyed uninterrupted health. She could not, therefore, realize Mabel's feebleness; and having only a moderate taste for learning herself, which had been blunted too, by attrition with Life's sterner requirements, she could not understand why Mabel preferred books to the spinning wheel and loom; and often upbraided her for her lack of domestic traits, averring that Lina was the only industrious child she ever had. Mabel had always taught the children, thus saving the expenses of tuition, and had done most of the family sewing; but Lina scrubbed the oaken chairs, prepared the fruit for drying, and did other homely duties with so much skill and spirit, Mrs. Bracken made her a favorite, because she had more in common with her. Nearly every household has its Calvins and Servetuses, its Cranmers and Bochers, persecuting and suffering, because God made them differently! Mrs. Bracken seemed never to understand the beautiful parable of the talents, but made her children pursue the same ever-circling, unbroken routine, without enquiring whether they had either capacity or inclination for it. After Lina's loss, Mabel strove unremittingly not only to carry on her accustomed duties, but to fill Lina's place; and to Nelly, who was growing old enough to observe it, it was heart-rending to see that frail, patient thing assume a weight of labor which the strongest alone could have borne. She thought of Cinderella, and wondered if no prince would ever come in his jewelled coach to take her to a kingdom worthy her lofty gifts and angelic beauty. Now, as she listened to the

last low words of the dying, she knew that a Prince had indeed come, mightier than Scipio or Alexander; for Death waited at the threshold to bear her in his chariot of Love, drawn by the milk-white steeds of Faith, up to the kingdom of Heaven.

Nelly crouched beside the bed, and gazed with streaming eyes into the calm, glorified face. "Mabel, my Mabel!" she sobbed, "ask God to let me die, too. I cannot, I cannot live if you are taken away. No one to love me as you do, no one to teach and guide me—oh, it is too terrible!"

"There is One above thee, Nelly," Mabel said, "One who sticketh closer than a brother, who not only called into life the sun, and moon, and stars, but the humblest violet that lifts its head in the silent, untrodden wood. He will not forget my prized, tender blossom," and her pale hands lovingly pressed the child's soft chestnut hair. "Oh," she continued, as the cadences of her failing voice died away like the far-off murmur of a departing stream, "remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them. And thou, my mother, Life has many trials; but He who said, 'Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden,' has made all burthens easy by the blessed assurance that in due season we shall reap if we faint not. The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble,—the name of the God of Jacob defend thee." The clear tremulous tones were hushed, and the thin white hand lay with a heavier weight on Nelly's scattered curls. She was dead.

CHAPTER XI.

Lay her i' the earth,
And from her fair and unpolluted flesh
Let violets spring.

HAMLET.

THERE is something awful in Death, whether he come to quiet the purr of the kitten, the twitter of the canary, the bark of the trusty house-dog, or the voice of the faithful gray-haired slave. But when he comes into our Holy of Holies, and with unrelenting, howbeit gentle, touch, hushes the hymn on lips that have ever given us our sweetest home-music, and takes from our Lares and Penates, presences that have been like beatitudes, we shudder and shrink appalled at his coming, though we know the golden strings of our Life-harp have been taken where they will never be tarnished by the rust and canker of earth's noisome grief-damp, and that the glory which has left our lives in shadow is shining in the imperishable arcades of heaven.

Mabel looked as if asleep, in the plain black walnut coffin, with its simple cambric lining. They placed her by the back window of the little parlor, and the evening sunlight came tremulously through the open casement, and lingered about her features as if conscious that when its beams would again enter there, her fair, holy face would be hid where the sunlight and the cloud are alike unseen.

Many were gathered in the room, to listen while Mr. Van Zandt read the solemn burial-service, and to

pay their last sad duty to the dead. There was no hut for miles around where Mabel's goodness was not known. Many a tidy sun-bonnet among the poor gave token of her handiwork; and through the long Sabbath afternoons, many a prayer went up for her from the hearts of humble parents as they sat beneath the fruit-trees shading their rude log huts, and listened while their children read the beautiful Bible lessons she had taught them in her leisure hours. In their daily tasks, the influence of her bright example smoothed away the rough edges of tempers often tried; in their sickness no hand had ever been so ready to minister to their sufferings; and when the mysteries of eternity drew nearer and nearer to the dying, no tongue had told them in such simple touching words of the certainty of a Better Life, and the unfailing goodness of Him who sustains the faithful through the valley of the shadow of Death. No wonder, then, the tears rolled down the swart faces of those coarse sun-browned men, as they fastened the coffin-lid over her dead white face.

They buried her in the old graveyard near the orchard, beside her grandfather. When the last sod had been laid on the grave, Mrs. Bracken, followed by Lucy and Amy, with the rest of the household, turned toward her desolate home, while the neighbors walked slowly away with bowed heads, talking in low tones of her who had been like an angel in their midst. But Nelly lay on the long grass under the willow trees, and moaned a broken prayer to be taken to heaven also.

"I will be to you all Mabel was, Nelly," Robert Blackburn said, as he laid his hand on her shoulder.

"You!" she said, lifting her head from the crushed

grass, and pushing back the tangled curls from her face.

"You make me unhappy, Nelly."

She arose and stood beside him. There was a strange creeping motion in the muscles of her throat; and a shiver passed over her as she took his hand and looked up into his face.

"I love you very dearly," she said, "and will never give you pain if I can help it."

"Come with me, then, to the house. The dew is very heavy, and you are not strong," he said, as he started from the graveyard. She went with him; but after all were asleep that night, she stole out again; and when the first morning-tints reddened into day, she still lay by the newly-heaped mound, where she had wept herself asleep.

Robert Blackburn returned to Louisville a few days after Mabel's burial. Having remained but a short time in the Lexington College, he had been for two years past engaged in business with his father in Louisville. Two months before Mabel died, he had gone to Fayette to arrange some mercantile matters with a house in Lexington, and meeting Nelly, prolonged his stay from week to week, until his father wrote peremptorily commanding him to return. He received the letter the day before Mabel's death, and left shortly after, while the tears of the stricken family were still flowing.

The summer passed slowly and mournfully at Lily Dell. The wheat and corn were parched by drought, and Mrs. Bracken had barely enough left of the last year's crop to support her family through the winter by dint of strictest economy. Having no means beyond

the produce of her farm, she was consequently unable to buy even the few holiday clothes it had been her custom to purchase for the children every fall and spring. But Nelly remodelled the old garments with so much taste and contrivance, her mother was not only surprised at the new, finished look her little fingers gave to articles which had seemed wholly use-worn, but her heart was touched by the cheerful contentment that made home the loveliest place on earth to her happy child, and colored even their dire poverty with the rainbow hues of peace. And many a tear came to her eyes when, sitting in her pew at church, she would see Nelly's serene, peaceful face shining like a half-hidden star beneath her gray quilted hood, while her clear voice rose full and sweet, like the holy exultation of the Spiritual Life over the hindering cares of the Earthly. Mrs. Bracken remembered well what were the rightful deserts of her children; and she felt the changes in her condition more keenly than ever, when the plain Quaker garb of her child was brought into contrast with the straw bonnets and gay ribbons of the young girls that attended service at the White Eagle church. But the true beauty, the true nobility, shone through all Penury's disguises; and the most careless eye, with a brain of any discrimination above it, could have understood and sympathized with the proud crushed mother's sorrow.

A greater trial yet was before her; for the winter was not ended when Robert Blackburn returned, and urged, with all the eloquence he could master, the propriety of consummating his engagement with Nelly by an immediate marriage. Mabel had told her mother of the elegance in which Mr. Blackburn lived, and Mrs. Bracken

shrunk dismayed at the thought of her sensitive child being submitted to the ordeal she must necessarily undergo when her condition should be placed in the vivid contrast with Robert's, which would be inevitable after their marriage. Nelly, besides, was very young, and had had no thought of leaving home for several years to come. She seemed almost terrified when he made known his wishes, and begged him not to ask her to go for some years at least; but he reproached her so bitterly with having no sincerity, she choked back her tears, and told him she would do whatever her mother said. There was a strong hope in her heart that Mrs. Bracken would resist his entreaties; for since Mabel's death, she had felt less inclined than ever to go from her mother's roof for a single night. Not that she was bowed by melancholy, or calloused by grief. It may seem singular that, loving Mabel so much more than Lina, she should bear the loss of the one so much better than the other. But there was a frightful uncertainty attending Lina's death, which terrified her; and in the slow, un murmuring decline of Mabel, who had given her her first lessons in Christian resignation, she was disciplined to look forward to the time when they must separate; and though at first she thought her heart would surely break, the heavenly lessons taught by the dead came back in all their power at last. So, as the mantle of the Translated fell on the lonely Earthbound, the unseen but burnished armor the sainted Mabel had worn,—needed no longer, now that the conquering spirit had gone from the warfare of this life to the eternal truce of Heaven,—had been girded on the young, earnest pilgrim-spirit left behind; and the one desire to exact of every energy its utmost

duty, so that her soul might be worthy the companionship of the blessed harbinger who had entered heaven before her, took hold of all her thoughts. It was this, therefore, that made her seem indifferent about complying with the promise she had made Robert a few months before,—this, and something more, which Mabel had once faintly, and only for a moment, seen, but of which Nelly herself had never dreamed.

Robert Blackburn pleaded earnestly with Mrs. Bracken. He told her his love for Nelly had turned him from all the follies that beset him before he knew her, and that his union with her would doubtless be the means of his sure establishment in a virtuous life. He spoke also of his means to make her comfortable, and bring around her not only the adornments of wealth, but the best facilities to cultivate her active intellect, and foster all the fine impulses of her heart. He argued so well, Mrs. Bracken was convinced it would be better in every respect for her child to go with him; and as her empty purse obviated the necessity for preparing bridal gear, it was decided the marriage should take place at the end of three days.

The time appointed for the wedding arrived. It was a bitter cold afternoon in February. Nelly took from the old clothes-press a dark green merino travelling dress, which had once been Mabel's, but which she had altered to fit her small figure during the interval between the time of Mrs. Bracken's decision and the marriage-day; and placed beside it a coarse but neat straw-bonnet she had braided under the tuition of Widow Donald, and which she had trimmed with a broad green ribbon and rose-colored satin lining Mabel had brought from Louis-

ville three years before. They were brushed of every mote, and laid on the bed in the little room, for they were to be her wedding apparel, as Robert had decided to leave Lily Dell immediately after the marriage ceremony, and go to Lexington that evening to be ready for the Louisville stage next day. Nelly carefully packed away her slender wardrobe in an old hair trunk which had been in the family from the time of her birth; and after attiring herself in her wedding dress, she tied on the plain, tidy bonnet, and telling her mother she wanted to take a ramble by the old school-house, and that she would not be long away, she started off toward the White Eagle cliff. The ground was spued and frozen in long spikes, and the wind howled piteously through the gorges as she ran on to the glen below the church. There was the Silverhorn, where she had fallen from Daisy but little more than three years before. It was frozen over; but near the foot of the sycamore there were holes in the ice, as if a horse had plunged across the brook. She sat down on an old root, and soberly watched the water float slowly beneath the ice, and whirl a moment in the open horse-tracks, as if it strove to leap out and be free. Of what was she thinking, as she sat there, rigid as the tree she leaned against, with her brown eyes strangely introverted, as if looking on a frozen rill in her own bosom rather than the white Silverhorn before her? Arouse thee, Nelly Bracken! This is no place for a bonny bride on her wedding-day! Get thee home, child,—oh, child indeed! The priest already waiteth to take thy solemn vows,—the vows to keep thee unto the one thou hast chosen, for better or worse, until death. Think of it well, Nelly,—for better or worse,—and

remember, whatever betide, those vows must not be broken.

Was Nelly thinking of this? She started up hurriedly and ran down the glen; but her eyes involuntarily turned backward to take a last look at the tree, when a bright something at its foot attracted her notice. She went back and picked up a small crimson velvet case of ivory tablets which was lying among its roots. With a quick, eager movement she unfastened the little bright gold clasp, and examined the leaves, but they were spotless. A delicate groove on one side held a gold pencil-case. This in its turn was closely scrutinized, as if in the hope of discovering a name or an initial indicative of the owner; but there was no character of any kind upon it. She glanced around her. No one was near; there was no sound even, except the plaintive sobbing of the wind as it came down the hollows in fitful, broken gusts. She ran back to the Silverhorn, and looked at the tracks in the ice, but she could not tell which way the horse's hoofs pointed, for the holes were irregularly broken, and there was no print in the dead leaves on the other shore. She stood for a moment lost in thought; but suddenly, as if reminded of some imperative, yet half-neglected duty, she started down the glen on her way homeward. She passed by the school-house, and the naked sycamores waved their white limbs as she went by; but there was no sight or sound in Nature to attract her then. Feelings she could not fathom, and which had stirred her soul's sea with a throe like a threatening volcano far below any depth she had ever sounded, monopolized all her thoughts, and made her frightened feet fly faster and faster, as if her very life depended on reaching home in

the shortest space of time; and hurrying on, she reached her room,—the room Lina had once occupied, and in which Mabel died,—just as the carriage with Robert Blackburn entered the lawn. She smoothed her tossed ringlets which the wind had roughed, and retying the little straw bonnet, waited demurely in the old home-cushioned arm-chair by the blazing log fire for the bridegroom to enter. The only wedding guests were Widow Donald, and Mr. and Mrs. Van Zandt, for Tony and Bill had gone to the South, though in different directions.

The marriage ceremony proceeded; but just as Robert Blackburn placed the ring on Nelly's trembling finger, the wind, which had risen almost to a hurricane, whirled with a mocking whistle round the house, and wrenching off a branch of the locust tree by the back window, dashed it madly against the panes, shattering them at Nelly's feet, and flouting its sharp breath in her face. She started and shuddered; but there was no time to think of omens, for the the road to Lexington wound through woods and gorges, and it was then past sunset; so with a hurried good-bye, she entered the coach with her husband.

Look back, Nelly, at the little windows in the gable. Thine eyes are blind with tears, but brush them away, and look, oh wild bird of Lily Dell, at the old nest whence thine untried wings are flying into the strange, great world. Look back, and think of the dead and of the living,—of the desolate room and the tenanted grave, and try thine ear to catch the sound of the low, dry cough which has startled thee at night, ere sweet lips were purpled by the lees of life. Look back, but

do not let the grief struggling in thy throat find utterance even in a moan, for few in the world can understand thy fine-strung spirit. The thick-falling night-shadows are building their frowning bulwark between thee and the roof-tree,—between the familiar By-Gone and the unknown To-Come. It is a fearful thing to thee, young, timid blue-bell, never darkened before by any but the sanctified shadows of home's holy sorrows. But do not, however much thou yearnest, tell him who sits beside thee how thou wouldest love to hide in his bosom, and weep there. It would be a queer freak for a bride, and mock-sentiment is disgusting. If thou must have comfort, turn thine eyes to the sky. See, the sinking Pleiades are sending their silent benediction to thee, and the Holy Dove broodeth above thee on trembling, silvery wings. Are thy tears flowing faster? Then look at Orion with his gleaming sword, and gird up thy young spirit for the battle of Life.

CHAPTER XII.

Yet less of sorrow lives in me
For days of happy commune dead;
Less yearning for the friendship fled,
Than some strong bond that is to be.

TENNYSON.

THE night of the third day after Nelly left Lily Dell, she was sitting by her husband in a rough, but close and comfortable stage-coach which rumbled heavily along the road to Louisville. There were scarcely ten miles more

to travel before reaching their journey's end, and Nelly's heart failed her as she thought of meeting her strange, new relations for the first time. She had seen them when a child, but remembered nothing of them; and as the night advanced, and every new relay of horses told her of the lessened distance, she felt a heart-sickening terror she could not overcome.

They reached the last horse-station, nine miles from the town. The night was stormy, and the snow-flakes were tossing wildly in the glimmering dark, as Nelly could see by the dim light of a lantern in the hands of a gray-haired man standing by the wayside watching the departure of a gentleman muffled in a heavy surtout and fur cap, who entered the coach and took the seat opposite her. It was too dark for his face to be seen; and completely absorbed by her own emotions, Nelly had scarcely noticed his entrance. He sat close in the corner of the leather-seat, and settling down amid his wrappings, in a few moments seemed to be asleep.

"We are nearly home, Nelly," Robert said, as he put his arm around her. She was shivering. "You are cold," he continued. "Get nearer, and share my cloak with me." He opened its wide, soft folds, and she crept to his side. Covering her, except her little bonneted head, he drew her closer to him, and whispered,

"I feel so eager to show them my wild blossom. I know after father sees you he will forget all his objections"—and then suddenly checking himself, he said, "You know he would have preferred for us to wait another year, or even longer, but he made no serious objection."

Nelly crouched lower and lower. Oh! if she had

only known this before! She buried her head in his bosom, and while her hand clutched his arm, she sobbed.

"Take me home, please take me back. I cannot go into the presence of those strange people. They will not love me, and then I—I shall die."

"Come, Nelly," Robert said sternly, "this is foolish. You are no longer a child, and must learn to be more womanly than to cry for trifles."

She raised her head. It was too dark for her to see his features; but if it had been noon-day she would not have ventured to meet the cold gaze her heart told her accompanied those words. Her tears were dried, not by resentment, but by the miserable, crushing realization that she was indeed no longer her own: that henceforth each look, and step, and word, and thought even—for she had a pure conscience, and knew the heart must harbor no thought it dare not embody and uphold to the scrutiny of the soul made one with it by God's holy ordinance—must be after such a pattern as suited him, regardless of her own inclinations or convictions; and that worse than all, while he would rule her, he was himself a slave, though a disobedient one, to the will of his father. He had told her he would take her directly to his father's house, which would be their home; but he had *not* mentioned objections to their union, on the part of any; for he well knew if he did so, she was too sensitive to risk the unkindness which would follow. All this came before her as she sat motionless and tearless, but, oh! how miserable during the remaining travel over those long, rugged miles! He had said little; but those few, brief sentences were the index to a volume of black, close-written leaves, and with the lightning eyes of a quick

intuition, their meaning was read at once. But she did not let it enter her heart. It stood flinty and cold in the vestibule of Reason, while with an agonizing prayer she closed the doors of her heart's inner chambers, that it might not chill nor trample the fresh young buds of trust so timidly springing around love's pure, unsullied altar. It was perhaps a trifling circumstance, too trifling to give rise to so much misery and fear; but a straw shows the course of the wind, and this sure finger-mark to the future seemed to Nelly so terrible, if Death had come at that moment, she would have left the earth with a shout. She who had never doubted one single thing in the whole world of her young life—narrow and circumscribed, it is true, yet still the whole world to her—had given that happy, full-peopled world away for one soul, whom she had placed on the throne of the exiled Past, and in whom she had found already greater cause for sorrow than she had dreamed of in her entire life. She could not look back; she trembled to look forward; but, without stopping for a moment, she felt, rather than *determined*, she would be led willingly by that inexplicable something the world calls Destiny, which had been drawing her so blindly for the past three years. From the time Robert Blackburn first visited Lily Dell, he had kept an unbroken correspondence with her up to the time of his visit two months before Mabel's death, when she promised to be his wife; and the unpleasant, if not unhappy, feeling that often crossed her heart—as if half its wishes were unfulfilled, though she could not have told what those wishes were—while it clothed her soul with blackness at times, obtained an influence over her she could not attempt to shake off.

She lifted her head again from the bowed posture into which she had sunk while all these reflections were passing through her mind.

"Forgive me, Robert," she said, "I am very foolish, but will try never to anger you again."

"I have not been angry," he replied, crustily; "I have n't such a temper as you would make out. But I can't encourage nonsense."

"I will not be nonsensical any more, then, and I am so sorry I thought you were angry when you were not." She was weeping again.

"Well, we won't think anything more about it," he said, in a kinder tone; for he felt touched by her sorrow, and then there was so much magnanimity in forgiving her! The stranger on the opposite seat drew himself up, and his hand moved restlessly beneath the folds of his gray surtout. There was a short sabre under his vest, and a fiery impulse in his heart, but both were stayed as he looked again at the frail, trembling child-wife, whose pale face, worn with the fatigue of travel, gleamed like a lost lily in the gray morning dusk. They reached Louisville, and stopped at the Big Ball Tavern before it was light enough to discern a friend from a stranger. Robert stepped out first, and assisting Nelly to the rough stone pavement, passed with her through the door that led into the main entrance. An expiring lamp hung from the ceiling, whose fitful glare made the shadows on the wall rise and fall like spectres. There were a few coals in the huge Franklin stove, and some wooden chairs before it, disarranged as if their occupants had left but a moment before. Nelly sat down, and drawing off her gloves, warmed and chafed her half-frozen hands, while Robert

went out to send one of the waiters to his father's residence to apprise his sister of their arrival, and to say they would go up home immediately after breakfast. He returned in a few minutes, and sitting down beside her, began to talk to her in the pleasant tones that had first won her regard. They cheered her now, like the first gleams of sunshine, though she could not feel wholly at ease as long as the dreaded meeting with his family was not accomplished; and they chatted cosily, not without some effort on Nelly's part, however, until breakfast was announced. As soon as the meal was over, they repaired to the room made ready for them, and Nelly, while her husband went below stairs to settle with their host, busied herself in smoothing her tangled hair, and brushing the tarnish of travel from her genteel but nearly threadbare dress.

"I suppose you can walk to the house, Nelly?" Robert said as he re-entered the room. "You are a country lassie, used to running, and it is not more than half a mile distant."

"Oh, yes!" she replied, "I can walk, certainly."

Ah, Nelly, feigning for the first time! For her very soul shrunk up at the thought of parading half a mile through the town at an hour when every one would be out, and she would be the gazing-stock of all; for they knew Robert had gone away to be married. She did not mind the walk, though her delicate limbs could barely support their own weight; because she had scarcely slept in the last two days, and the constant jolting over the rough roads had worn away her strength. But she felt so abashed and grieved at being thrust, as it were, right out before the rude, prying eye of the world. He was

not too poor to hire a carriage, she knew; for she saw the texture of his cloth, and then the money he had thrown to well-fed servants on the route was more than sufficient to spare her this painful mortification. Perhaps he had not thought of it? But that was worst of all. She would rather impute his conduct to stinginess, cruelty, anything indeed than a lack of delicacy or perception. She drew her veil—an elegantly-wrought web of finest black lace, the only costly article her wardrobe contained, and which her mother had worn fifteen years before—closely over her face, and putting her arm through her husband's, stepped with him into the street. She dared not look on either side, for she felt, without seeing, the curious glances that were cast upon her through the many windows whose curtains were slyly drawn just enough to take aim at her shrinking figure; for the stage-driver, Jack Howland, had spread the news of their arrival, and the busy-bodies were fidgety to see and criticize the bride.

The snow lay deep and spotless on all the roofs and paths, and glistened in the brilliant morning beams, as they walked on toward Mr. Blackburn's residence; and its dazzling whiteness brought into stronger relief Nelly's little figure in the faded traveling-dress. But she did not think of that, for she had never been thrown with persons who made her feel the inferiority of her worldly condition, her mother having always avoided contact with such, thus shielding her child from arrows that would have pierced her sensitive spirit to its core.

She was walking briskly beside her husband when a sound of sleigh-bells came pealing down the street, with the chime of merry voices. Nelly had not heard their

music since her early childhood; for in the quiet neighborhood to which Mrs. Bracken had withdrawn after her husband's death, the only sleighs she ever saw were the coarse but pleasant "jumpers," fitted up for each season, by fastening a goods-box securely to a sled. The music stirred her young blood irresistibly, and throwing up her veil, her beaming face with its innocent look of pleased enjoyment was revealed to the gaze of the jubilant riders. There were several ladies and gentlemen in the sleigh, who bowed familiarly to Robert Blackburn as they passed, and sent a scrutinizing glance after his companion. The gay robes and furs worn by the female riders dazzled Nelly's eyes. She had never seen such rich dresses before.

"Are they friends of yours?" she asked. It was the first time she had spoken since they left the tavern.

"Yes," he replied, "and they seemed a good deal struck by the face of my little beauty, too. They will call to see you soon; and then we'll see whether my country girl will not compare with the town belles, notwithstanding their high opinion of themselves."

Nelly shuddered, but made no reply. "Oh!" she thought, "they will come in their gorgeous dresses and pride, and I shall never be able to open my lips in their presence." She would have given worlds to have been seated again by her mother's humble hearth-stone, but choking back the terror and grief that rose in her throat like a stone, she went, or was drawn listlessly along, until at last they stopped before a stately residence in the best built part of the town. Robert opened the gate, and they passed up the gravelled walk to the porch. Nelly hesitated, as if afraid to enter, but her husband, smiling

at what seemed to him only an interesting sort of timidity, drew her on through a wide hall, and opening a door on one side, ushered her into a large, elegantly-furnished bed-chamber, in which a lady stood before a tall mirror, finishing her morning toilet. She turned as they entered, and advancing towards Nelly, offered her cheek to be kissed — that most contemptible insult to an affectionate spirit — and said, with a patronizing air :

"You are very little changed since a child — I should have known you anywhere."

There was no "welcome home," no kindly grasp of the hand, no loving pressure of earnest, truthful lips, no tender, sisterly embrace; and the crushed wild-flower of Nelly's spirit drooped indeed as she suffered her husband to lead her to the roaring coal-fire. Before she had taken her seat, however, a tall, middle-aged man entered at a side-door, and she knew her father-in-law was before her. She went forward timidly, with upturned face and outstretched hand.

"Father," she said, in a low, faltering tone, while the tears came like pleaders, and stood in her large, pure eyes. But there was no softening the spirit that looked through Sylvester Blackburn's cold, pale eyes — eyes that seemed like clothes we sometimes see — as if they had once been blue, but some strong alkali had well-nigh taken all the color out. He permitted her to shake hands with him, and then turning to her husband, said sternly :

"You are much needed at the store, Robert. There is collecting to be done, unfinished from last year's work, and canvassing to begin, for new speculations. You have stayed too long on your wedding trip."

Robert replied, not in the respectful manner of a

loving son, but with the fawning, apologetic air of a servant rather, as he gave the reasons of his two or three days' delay; and while Nelly warmed herself by the fire, looking the while into its red, seething heart as if it were a picture of her own destiny, her husband listened to the lowered voice of his father as he talked of debit and credit, and made hazardous, desperate schemes to save the baseless superstructure of apparent wealth he had reared in the past ten years, but which was trembling with the throes of an inevitable downfall. A word spoken in a louder tone occasionally reached Nelly's ear, giving her a vague idea of his meaning, but she dared not trust herself to think of it, and strove to banish even the sound of his voice, by listening, as her sad eyes gazed through the long, large windows into the street, to the ring of the sleigh-bells without, or the shouts of snow-balling boys loitering on their way to school.

After an hour had passed, breakfast was announced. Nelly was surprised, for she had eaten her morning meal long before, and had always been accustomed to breakfast as the sun rose. She excused herself from going to the breakfast-room with so much ease and grace, that Delia Blackburn paused for an instant and looked at her with ill-concealed astonishment. Weak-minded, and so coarse by nature that all the polish of that busiest lapidary, Fashion, could not hide the crude grain of her character, she considered pride and ostentation the best evidences of good breeding; and the quiet, unstudied politeness of Nelly's manner, — taught as she had been by the noblest Chesterfield, her own refined nature, — startled the rich man's daughter with a surprise, which was quickly succeeded by a feeling of indignation, as if

the country girl had been guilty of a most inexcusable impertinence in acting so like a true-bred lady.

Nelly sat by the fire lost in thought, until the return of her husband and her new relatives aroused her. The elder Blackburn passed through the room and out of the house without speaking. Robert sat down beside her, and briefly told her of the immediate necessity for him to go on a collecting tour through the country, which would occupy him several weeks; and before she had time to think of her loneliness, he kissed her, and was gone.

"I would like to be shown to my room, if you please," she said, as the figure of her sister-in-law swept past her, and languidly buried itself in an arm-chair opposite.

"You had best remain where you are during the day, unless you wish to change your dress," was the reply. "Coal is expensive, and pa is unable to afford fires constantly in any of the rooms but mine and his. You will have a fire kindled to go to bed by, but it is preferable you should sit here through the day."

"I do not want a fire, thank you," Nelly said, awed by the air of superiority the speaker assumed, and sickened by a sense of her own desolation. "I will go to my room, however, if it be convenient, and change my dress. I do not mind the cold."

Delia Blackburn rose with slow indifference from her chair, and rang the bell. Then settling again stupidly into her seat, she neither spoke nor stirred until a handsome negro woman, with a manner her mistress might well have imitated, entered the room and asked her pleasure. It was given in a few words, and Nelly followed her conductor up stairs. The woman opened

the door of an ill-furnished room, and waited for the bride to enter.

"You must have had a cold journey, ma'am," she said respectfully, as she drew Nelly's trunk, which had been taken up some time before, farther from the wall.

"Yes, but it is ended now, and I"—Nelly could say no more. The negro's kind tones had stirred the sea she had been all the morning endeavoring to keep calmed.

"This is a strange place to Missis, but it will soon seem na-t'ral like," the kind creature ventured to say, as she assisted Nelly to disrobe herself; and the lost stranger-heart was beginning to beat with a happier pulse even for those few words, when the sharp impatient ring of Delia Blackburn's bell made them both start, and the woman hastily left Nelly alone. She took off her traveling dress, and brushing her long, bright curls, put on a simple calico frock, one of her best dresses,—for she had but two others, a merino, and a silk that had once been Mabel's. This calico dress was the only additions her mother had been able to make to her wedding apparel; and though she had two or three half-worn frocks besides, she had left them with her little sisters, knowing those she retained were sufficient for her needs.

The dress was made neatly; yet as Nelly had never been in a city in her life, its cut was pretty much a fashion of her own. In a few minutes her toilet was complete, but she could not go back into the stately presence of her sister-in-law. She hid her face in the pillows of her bed, and wept until her heart seemed nearly broken. She was reminded at last of the cold, and the danger of remaining in it, by Tempy, the serving

woman, who returned with a message from Delia, requesting her to go below.

Delia Blackburn seemed to have undergone a complete metamorphosis during the rest of the day. She was playful and loquacious, sometimes almost affectionate; and Nelly, if she had not been worn with fatigue and a sense of coming sorrow which she dared not utter, and for which her instinct told her she would get no sympathy, might have grown tranquil after a while; but when night came, and she essayed to climb the stairs, her limbs failed her, and she was brought by the kind arms of Tempy faint and suffering back to Delia's room.

It was too expensive to keep a fire up stairs, as we have seen; so Nelly had to occupy a couch in her sister-in-law's chamber, during the long illness in which she lay from that night. It was too expensive to keep a fire in the richly-furnished drawing-room, whose Brussels carpet and cushioned chairs,—though they took precedence over any other household gods of their tribe in Louisville, those being the primitive days when raw hide and cast-off tatters made both cushion and carpet,—had been threatened more than once with the disenchanting stroke of the auctioneer's hammer. The visitors, therefore, that thronged to "call on the bride," were ushered immediately into Delia's room, to be presented to the sick, mortified stranger, whether she would or not. "Come in," would be Delia's careless greeting, as the callers rapped at her door; and then smiling to see their ill-concealed surprise at being presented to the young wife in her bed, she would, as she fancied, speedily restore their complacency by telling them Nelly was very unceremonious, and they needn't waste formalities on her. What

wonder the child sickened with a malady not born of the flesh, until her soul almost died within her?

"Oh! if Robert were only here!" she would think through the long, silent, welcome nights, her only time for quiet and solitude, each day being taken up by the senseless twaddle of idle droppers-in. He came only once, however, during the period of her illness, and then remained but a few hours, having urgent business abroad which still occupied him.

When she left her bed, the grass was springing in all the by-paths, and the young leaves were bursting bright and green through the dark brown buds. Oh how heavenly was the aspect of Nature to her, captive as she had been in the gloomy town walls so many long weeks.

One Sabbath morning she went after breakfast to her room to prepare for church. She had not been outside the yard since her arrival; and though under different circumstances she would have dreaded to go before strange people, she had been so long immured, her fingers trembled with eagerness as she opened her trunk and drew forth her best dress, the old but well-kept silk Mabel had worn so long. It had been many years since it was purchased, and successive alterations in its fashion had so reduced the pattern, there was no such thing as modernizing it any more. Nelly looked at it, the dress she had considered so genteel before she left Lily Dell, and a feeling of shame her better nature hesitated to acknowledge came over her as she contrasted it with the costly brocade she saw lying on Delia's bed a few minutes before. She dressed herself, and after tying on her straw bonnet, she threw a light woollen shawl around

her shoulders, for the air was still too keen for wrappings to be laid aside, and went below stairs to Delia's room. Delia was already waiting for her; and the difference in their appearance was so striking, it was not at all strange. Sylvester Blackburn eyed his daughter-in-law with a perplexing scrutiny, and bit his lip as she passed through the door with her unpretending, modest gait, beside his stately-stepping daughter. Robert was again absent, and Nelly, feeling lost and bewildered by the looks she received from the passing church-goers, many of whom she had seen in her sick-room, crept close beside her sister-in-law, as if to hide her own little person entirely behind the more showy figure of the other.

They entered the church. A tremulous, plaintive voluntary floated away from the organ; and as they passed into Mr. Blackburn's pew, Nelly's tears gushed like rain. She knelt on the cushions, and remained bowed in prayer until the music ceased and the service began. But when the keys of the organ were struck again to the lofty music of the *Te Deum*, her face was happy and beaming, and the tones of her voice mingled with the anthem. There were louder voices singing, but many an eye turned toward her, attracted by the pure, full tones that rang out distinct and clear, like the notes of a flute in a concert of many instruments. There was no affectation of vigor, no distortion of feature, no straining after effect. Her music was the out-pouring of a soul swelling with earnest aspirations after holiness and truth. Her only teachers since Mabel's first illness, had been Nature's peerless harmonies; and as if without effort, her voice, full, and soft, and searching, melted

through her half-parted lips, and thrilled every heart with its low, rapturous sweetness.

"Your sister sings finely, Miss Delia," whispered a gentleman in the adjoining pew, as the anthem ended.

"Yes," Delia replied, "she sings very well, for an uncultivated person."

Nelly overheard the words, and her face blazed with mortification. "I know I have had poor opportunities," she thought. "I never had hundreds of dollars spent to teach me music, as Delia says she had in New York; but Father Mahon said Mabel understood music as well as any one, and she taught me the notes and all the musical signs; and then after she lost her voice, she used to listen to me while I practised, and would tell me whenever I sung amiss. But she did not scream and make faces, as Delia does. I wonder if that is what she means by cultivation?"

She knew how infinitely inferior Delia Blackburn was to her dead Mabel; and though she herself had never had a thought of superiority over any one,—would God she had! it would have spared her many a heartache!—she could not help contrasting Delia's careless speech about her ignorance with Mabel's gentle zeal in instructing her. Nelly had not learnt that to the majority of the world, *cultivation* means the distortion of all high gifts and impulses from their natural course,—the harnessing of Pegasus to the plough, as if his free-winged limbs might be graceful only in the jog-trot of their own cart-horses. Such persons, having no talent themselves, confound an *acquired taste* (which they learn to foster by living among refined people,) with *cultivated*

capacity; and go into extacies over the artistically painted cheek of Pedantry, while they pass with a sneer the fresh, healthful, blooming face of true Wisdom.

When the services were ended, as Nelly with her companions was passing through the church door, she encountered the gaze of a small, delicate girl who stood on the pavement. She was very fair, and the exquisite purity of her complexion was heightened by the raven blackness of her hair and eyes. There was such a look of intense suffering on her features! Nelly paused involuntarily, as if tempted to speak, when Mrs. Arnett, who was standing by the girl's side, advanced and offered Nelly her hand, at the same time introducing Rachel Hunt. Nelly's heart rose to her throat, for she remembered all Widow Donald had told her of the young orphan whose parents died so soon after their removal to the West, and whom Mrs. Arnett had adopted as her own child. She knew nothing of the wrongs Rachel Hunt had suffered at Dora Berry's hands. They had been confided to Mrs. Bracken, whose judgment had decided they should not be revealed; and Nelly knew only that the young stranger had no parents, no relatives even, and that she had had many bitter trials. But these were reasons enough to make her eyes fill with tears, and her lips quiver, as she put her arm around the girl's neck and kissed her mouth. She stopped a moment to answer Mrs. Arnett's questions about all in Lily Dell, but Delia and her father beckoned her on; and with a hasty promise to go to the old woman's house in a few days, she hurried away, to be rebuked when she reached home for greeting a strange girl in the street in that unheard-

of way; and to weep in secret because every outlet through which her feelings ventured to creep was blocked up by cold, stony formalities, until her heart seemed ready to burst.

CHAPTER XIII.

If the love of the heart is blighted, it buddeth not again;
If that pleasant song is forgotten, it is to be learned no more.

TUPPER.

NELLY went as she had promised, and sat several hours with Mrs. Arnett and her adopted daughter. Never before had she seen a countenance like Rachel Hunt's. There was all the intellectual light of Mabel's face in the totally different features; and a purity in every look and tone as exalted as that which had made the life of the early dead seem like the brief sojourn of an angel,—but yet how unlike Mabel was she in other respects! Mabel, tall and slight, with eyes like the sky, and hair so light and golden, it seemed like floating sunshine, drew all things toward her by her spiritual beauty and loving heart, though her frail life, and its exemption from every grosser feeling, encircled her with a halo, as it were, reminding all of her separateness from the children of earth. Rachel was smaller in person; but though her figure was hardly more substantial than Mabel's, there was a sinewy strength apparent in every movement, strongly contrasting with the willowy motions of the other; and in her black, searching eyes, and the

high, smooth outlines of her white forehead, dwelt evidences of a resolute spirit, incorruptible and fearless, though quiet, and void of boastfulness. Mabel tasted Life's bitter waters, and turning away, but without complaint, sought the serener, holier Existence. Rachel, with the fortitude and will of a martyr, swallowed a deeper, bitterer draught, yet breasted every wave of sorrow and wrong with the fixed, dauntless determination sanctified by reliance on the Almighty, to find the far-off shore of Certainty and Right.

Mrs. Arnett had taken her, insane and insensible, from the wilderness road where she found her the night after Cameron's departure from Louisville. For three months Rachel sat in the little room wherein her mother died, neither boisterous nor puerile, but with a firm, unflinching look in her face, never speaking, except to say:

"She is not dead, and I am going to tell him."

The day after she found Rachel in the wood, Mrs. Arnett went to Oliver Berry, to discover, if possible, the cause of her foster-child's strange journey that night. He briefly told her of Edgar Cameron's sudden return, his departure a few hours afterwards for Lily Dell, and Rachel's flight; for Dora had persuaded him — *for the girl's sake, solely* — not to repeat the falsehood she had related as coming from her, and Mrs. Arnett was still left in doubt as to the cause of her poor child's insanity.

A few days after, Dora Berry herself went to see her; and Mrs. Arnett, wholly ignorant of the circumstances that had driven Rachel into the wilderness, conducted the visitor to her sick child's room, and was in the act of entering, when with a spring the insane girl cleared the space between her seat and the open door, and thrusting

the intruder out, took her foster-mother by the hand and led her in. But she did not speak, and soon becoming quiet, Mrs. Arnett left and returned to her guest, who waited in another room. She entreated Dora Berry to tell her if she knew of any reason for Rachel's unhappy condition. She nodded her head mournfully, and pointed to a chair beside her own. Mrs. Arnett sat down and listened. Mrs. Berry told her of the sudden coming of Edgar Cameron, and of Rachel's evident joy at his return, which she expatiated upon as an evidence of something more than friendship. She then said further, that when she mentioned at the dinner-table, Edgar's intention of going directly to Lily Dell, Rachel left the room, and was probably driven by grief arising from a most unfortunate jealousy, as she termed it, to pursue him; though with what object she could not guess, she said, and shook her head perplexedly.

Mrs. Arnett still sat thinking, long after Dora Berry left the house. But she was by no means satisfied. She could not attribute to Rachel the feelings Mrs. Berry had proposed as the interpretation of her terrible affliction; and she passed many an unhappy hour during the long time that elapsed before reason returned to the girl's disordered brain. But when it did come, and with it the plain, truthful narrative of all that had occurred, with the concluding words of the emaciated sufferer:

"And as soon as strength returns I will go again — I will search the world over, until I find him and bring him to her," Mrs. Arnett clasped the afflicted girl to her bosom, and groaning in the intensity of her conflicting feelings, determined even more resolutely to defend her from all trouble thereafter; and reproached herself more

severely than ever, for giving her up to the Berrys as she had done, though she thought it would be best for Rachel at the time. It was still several weeks before the sufferer was able to leave her room, for with returning sanity came entire prostration of the nervous system. In the meantime, Mrs. Arnett was ceaselessly busy, deciding what course to pursue for the future, until at last her resolution was taken. Rachel's intellect was yet feeble and flickering, and she knew stout opposition to anything the girl considered right would, in all probability, unsettle her forever. So she determined to humor and persuade where she dared not combat.

When her mind was fully made up, she dressed herself with scrupulous neatness and went to Mr. Berry's store. She had not entered it since the day after Rachel was found. Walking straight up to the counter where Mr. Berry stood, she said slowly:

"I have come, Mr. Berry, to tell you I know the reason why Rachel Hunt left your house. She lived with me five years before she ever entered your door, and I never knew her to tell an untruth. I believe you are an honest man, and for that reason I have taken the trouble to come to you to say that the man, woman, or child that wrongs Rachel Hunt, wrongs me sevenfold. You understand, therefore, why neither of us can ever have any dealings with you or yours again."

She turned abruptly away, leaving him surprised and non-plussed. He had never imagined he had wronged Rachel, and the old woman's decided stand on the girl's side made him think, for the first time, that he might have injured her indeed. But another conference with Dora quieted his compunctions, and he returned to the

conviction that Rachel Hunt was as corrupt as the artful widow had at first represented her.

Having done just what her upright soul prompted, Mrs. Arnett hurried home and sought the little room where Rachel sat, pale and weak, but busily occupied in sewing.

"I want to talk to you, child," she said as she sat down by the fire, for it was still quite cool, though nearly spring-time, "I want to talk to you about your plan to seek Mr. Cameron. I mean to help you all I can, dear, too; but if I were you I would not start until I could find out which way he went. There are so many different Indian tribes, you know, and you are very weakly to travel long, in doubt, too, all the time. You just wait a bit, and I will get Bill and Tom to find out if he did n't go to the Cherokees. You know they have a school close by the Sulphur Spring, and that is not far from old man Carper's. Bill will be here in May with his team, and I will tell him to ask all about it."

"But Miss Mabel — she will hear of his return, and what will become of her?"

"She will not blame you, dear, and if she does, she will not blame you long. She is too good to think evil, and everybody here knows Dora Berry too well to listen to her story. God will show us the right way, depend upon it; and you will be happy and have good friends long after that wicked woman is cut off by every one."

"I do not fear any worldly disaster for myself," Rachel replied. "I learned long ago to be happy without society; but I cannot sit idle when the two beings I would do the most to serve are suffering, and apparently through my agency."

But Mrs. Arnett reasoned with her from day to day, until at length she saw the folly of the course her frenzied grief had prompted; and she resolved to wait until God in His mercy would reveal to her what she must do. Still, she could not be persuaded to let Mr. Berry's statement stand for the truth, thus misleading the people around the White Eagle church into the belief that Cameron had started to Fayette, and had probably been murdered on the route. She insisted upon stating to the Brackens, at least, the truth in reference to his hasty departure from Louisville; and Mrs. Arnett promised to communicate the facts to Widow Donald as early as possible, and, through her, to Mabel's mother. This she did in the spring, when Bill came as usual to the city on business; and before the summer opened, Mrs. Bracken had heard all the facts we have recorded. But she wisely withheld the intelligence from Mabel, and exacted of Widow Donald and her son a promise that they would mention it to no one; for she feared it might by some means be communicated to her dying child, and she knew the revulsion of feeling it would occasion would hurry her off even faster than she was going.

Year after year had passed, as we have seen. Mabel had gone where the parted and sorrowing see no longer "through a glass darkly," but "face to face," and Rachel, diligent, and faithful, and patient, still kept her place in Mrs. Arnett's household, listening, and waiting, and praying for some intelligence of the stricken and exiled wanderer, though as yet without success. Sabbath after Sabbath she went with her old mother to church, passing the pew where the brilliant, heartless destroyer of her happiness sat with her gold-clasped Prayer-book,

and uttered in her half-hissing, half-whining voice the soul-searching responses of the blessed Litany. There was no room in Rachel Hunt's lofty heart for hatred; but her pale cheek grew paler whenever she passed Dora Berry in the church or on the street, for she could not forget the black heart hid beneath her gems and smiles, and her soul sickened, as well it might, that such beauty and talent as hers should be enslaved irredeemably to malignity and evil deeds, under the mask of saintliness and good works.

There was much meaning in Rachel Hunt's look, as Nelly encountered it for the first time at the door of the church. Mrs. Arnett had detained her there for some time, waiting for Nelly to come out, that she might speak to her; and she had seen Dora Berry, who sat several pews back of the Blackburns, scanning the young bride from head to foot as she passed out. Besides, Mrs. Arnett had told her of a report throughout the town that Sylvester Blackburn had fallen a victim to the widow's arts, and that she would in a few months be his wife. Rachel remembered Dora's hatred of Mabel, and having learned much of Nelly's nature from her simple-minded but observant old mother, she trembled for the future of the confiding, child-like thing, as she looked into her innocent, mournful eyes.

From the first day of their acquaintance, a warm friendship sprung up between Nelly and Rachel Hunt. Isolated from all she had ever known and loved, and divided by the remorseless grave from the only being that had ever read the riddle of her soul aright, Nelly had lived as one in a dream, until this new companion came in Mabel's stead. Many persons had visited her

— first formally, and then as friends — during her long illness; kind-hearted persons, who saw and esteemed the soul beneath her humble guise; and she gave them in return a sincere affection, grateful for their friendly efforts to indemnify her for the lack of tenderness they could see she keenly felt. But she could not talk to them. She could not tell them how her soul heaved like the swelling sea beneath the Divine light of truths they had never thought of fathoming, and found more eloquence in a blade of grass, very often, than in the most elaborate sermon. Rachel Hunt's intellect had been carefully nurtured by her mother, and its vigorous growth had been well advanced by her own untiring industry since her mother's death. She had been far lonelier, however, than her new friend. Nelly had had the consciousness of being at home, while *she* felt like an uprooted weed on a shoreless sea. The discovery then of a mind so consonant with her own, was the beginning of a new life to her also; and she who had entered no door but that of the church, save on errands of duty, since her frightful affliction, went often to Nelly's retired room, and beguiled many an hour which had otherwise been dark indeed.

Delia Blackburn, during one of these visits, was presented to "Mrs. Arnett's daughter," as Nelly called her, and became much interested in the silent orphan. Nelly's loving, earnest nature had won its way to the heart of her sister-in-law, despite her cold indifference at first; for Delia, notwithstanding her selfishness and pride, had a heart that could be won by kindness. But could it be kept? She had never thought of being guided by principle, and with an inordinate desire to please, her love

of admiration made her vacillating as a weather-cock, scarcely retaining the same mind twenty-four hours, and adopting the opinions and habits of whomsoever she fancied. This, however, Nelly had not discovered; and she received the affection Delia offered with the most willing confidence, never dreaming of its withdrawal. She felt pained, therefore, by the reserve with which Rachel treated her sister-in-law, and after their intimacy had been of sufficient standing to warrant it, she asked her why it was so; but received an evasive though decided reply, which silenced her at once.

In proportion, however, as Rachel's resolute indifference toward Delia became apparent, her love for Nelly increased, and she manifested an interest in her which would have been painful to any thoughtful observer, but which created in the glad heart of its recipient only a joyful happiness. Nelly had no head for reasoning; and though her conclusions were nearly always just, they were seized by the intuition of active mentality rather than by any logical deduction. She therefore often distrusted her antipathies, as she called them, because unable to tell how a look or a word had opened the door of the spirit whence it emanated; and though she felt continually there was no harmony between herself and Delia, she had had no opportunity to see her character brought out, and turned away from any inward suggestion having a tendency to make her doubt. She would see only such traits as were favorable to her hope of establishing an abiding affection between them. But Rachel was different; and knowing Delia's disposition, not only from her own observation, but the reputation she bore in the community, calculated unerringly what

the future held in store for Nelly, when once Dora Berry's evil machinations should creep into the indiscriminating mind of her sister-in-law. Rachel already saw the game Dora Berry was planning; for though, three years before, when the widow's designs were ordered in a different quarter, Delia Blackburn and her friends laughed at and condemned the game she was playing, only a few months before Nelly's marriage a friendly intercourse began between them; and Rachel was not the only one who read its meaning, at least on the part of the invincible intriguer. She did not call on Nelly, as did the rest of the Blackburn acquaintance, but went often to see Delia, and thus had many opportunities to read and scrutinize the simple volume of Nelly's transparent character. There was such a lack of genuineness in all her conduct, notwithstanding her affectation of simplicity and truth, Nelly could never be enticed to feel any interest in her; and her evident aversion, which indeed almost amounted to fear, was quickly seized and whetted in secret by Dora Berry, to be used, when occasion should prompt, as a powerful weapon against her. But Nelly did not mention her dislike and dread, even to Rachel Hunt. Dora Berry's name had never been pronounced by either of them, at least in the hearing of the other; and they mutually wondered why, for Nelly had never heard of the wrongs Rachel had suffered, and the latter in turn had but a faint idea of Nelly's instinctive aversion.

Mr. Blackburn had manifested but little interest in the fascinating widow, however. His thoughts were wholly taken up with the state of his business, and he had time for nothing but the devising some way to avert

the crash about to take place. The summer was nearly ended, and no arrangement had been made to keep in operation, during the approaching winter, the large business house he had opened several years before, and upon whose credit he had built and furnished the elegant mansion in which he lived. A firm in Pittsburg, from whom he purchased his furniture, had already waited two years for payment, and at last threatened to sue him openly. He, therefore, the summer after Nelly's marriage, had the furniture of his drawing-rooms removed by night to a warehouse in the lower end of the town, where it was sold privately to a stranger who had but recently settled on the opposite side of the river, as new furniture, just received. The man who sold it was interested with Mr. Blackburn in business, and the subterfuge was used to save their failing reputation. But quirks and quibblings were of no avail, and in October the extensive warehouse and private residence were sold under the auctioneer's hammer. Nelly went to live in a little cottage her husband bargained for in the neighborhood of Mrs. Arnett, and her father-in-law took his daughter to a boarding-house adjoining Mr. Berry.

CHAPTER XIV.

I tell you, hopeless grief is passionless,—
That only men incredulous of despair,
Half-taught in anguish, through the midnight air
Beat upward to God's throne in loud access
Of shrieking and reproach.

E. B. BROWNING.

A FEW days after the sale of his property, a servant entered Sylvester Blackburn's room one morning, with a delicate perfumed note. It was from Dora Berry, who requested, as a great favor, the privilege of an interview with him in her brother's drawing-room at an hour specified. He went, and found her, dressed in plain but elegant taste, seated near the fire. She arose as he entered; and advancing to meet him half-timidly, said in a low tone,

"I—I would apologize for the seeming boldness I have manifested, if my heart did not assure me you are the very soul of honor," and the light clasp of her bony hand tightened just a little, while she looked up inquiringly into his face.

"I trust I may prove myself worthy your good opinion," he replied, as he suffered her to lead him toward the hearth. She offered him a chair, and seating herself beside him with the apparent simplicity of a child, she made him a tender of all her property, amounting to rather more than two thousand dollars, "to begin business again," she said, "if such a small sum could be of any use."

It would be difficult to express the surprise this offer gave him. Such child-like confidence in his integrity, such disinterested magnanimity, he had never known before. Coming, too, at a time when all plans and resources had failed, he looked upon her as his saviour almost, and made no effort to conceal the admiration she had inspired. He sat several hours with her, detailing the plans he proposed to execute with the means she tendered so generously, and which she implored him not to grieve her by refusing; and expressed in unfeigned language the debt of gratitude he owed her. The money was amply sufficient, he told her, to restore his commercial standing; and she listened with delighted interest as he presented to her mind's eye the splendid superstructure he would soon be able to rear again, through her noble aid.

The flush on her cheek deepened, as she sat alone after he had gone, canvassing the course she had marked out, and rejoicing in the success of every scheme thus far tried. This last had been a desperate throw; and if she should fail in her ultimate object,—her marriage with him,—she knew very well she might wait forever for the money loaned him; for he did not scruple to say he never expected to pay his debts, and she, as well as many more in Louisville, knew his conscience was as leaden as his heart. But she knew, also, he would occupy no middle place in point of worldly appearance, let the means to support it be gotten as they might, and that Sylvester Blackburn's wife would hold a front rank in outward magnificence always. This was her highest, her only aim; and her arrows had struck home with undeviating certainty.

He went again to see her next day; and in the same frank manner she expressed her eagerness to get in her funds, which were loaned to various persons until the first of the coming year. "It was so unfortunate," she said, "that she could not place it in his hands at once, so that he might get a business started in advance of others, as had been his custom. But she hoped the delay might not prove a serious disadvantage," and a peculiar smile stole over her face, despite her efforts to restrain it. He did not observe it, however, and if he had seen it, would not have understood it.

Day after day he went to the house of Mr. Berry; and night after night found him by the side of the beautiful widow, by whom his flinty, money-loving heart had been ensnared. He had made every arrangement to begin business again in January; and the change in his prospects was so sudden and unexpected, he yielded himself up to the bewildering pleasure it gave him, and lived in the society of the idolized being who had opened the path to success. He could not conceal his devotion, and her manner was so tender, he was emboldened at last to make her an offer of himself. She seemed startled, almost confounded, as if no such thought had ever occurred to her; but without dallying long, accepted his proposal, and promised to marry him in a few weeks.

Dora Berry lay awake that night until nearly dawn, chuckling over the success of her schemes. She had not a dollar at interest, for all her money was in the hands of her brother-in-law. But she was not the simpleton to let it slip through her fingers, and she fabricated the story she had told Mr. Blackburn, to gain time, feeling determined to secure him before the money

went into his hands. She had no fear of detection either, for she had made him promise solemnly not to mention the proposed loan to any one.

All Louisville was surprised when the marriage of Sylvester Blackburn and Dora Berry was announced; for he had openly, and more than once in past years, expressed his detestation of her character, and at one time had positively forbidden his daughter to hold any intercourse with her. Very few persons, however, suffered it to perplex them long; for he had lost the friendship of the community by the reckless lack of principle that characterized his business transactions; and her well-deserved reputation as a malignant ever-busy evil-doer, had barred the hearts of all against her, except a few straggling strivers from the lowest walks of life, who, having become disgusted with plain, honest humility, were sulking with envy toward all who were superior to themselves in station or character; and flattered by the favor of the elegant Mrs. Blackburn, were her willing spies into the affairs of those whose purity of life precluded all intercourse between herself and them. Still, her object was attained; and the late Dora Berry, detested by all who knew her, and at last, though not wholly, understood by the simple-hearted relatives who had wronged the innocent so deeply on her account, rolled through the streets in the handsomest carriage Louisville could boast, and bore on her erect, beautiful head the richest hat and plumes, as she walked down the aisle of the church with the tread of an empress.

Nelly was living quietly in her simple, humble home. She had endeared herself to all who knew her by her sincere Christian life; and if friendship without can ever

compensate for sorrow at home, she would have had little room for grief. She was always cheerful and unrepining, for no change of worldly circumstance could affect her spirit, taught as she had been to love lofty principles and true content more than all the treasures of earth. But there were times, of which none but God had cognizance, however, when her soul, draped in the very sackcloth of desolation, almost died within her for the want of companionship; and the feeling which had occasionally come over her even in the peaceful harmony of Lily Dell,—the feeling that no soul would ever measure the depths of her own,—had grown into a settled melancholy conviction which, though it manifested itself in no other way, lowered the glad mirth of her voice, and faded her cheek to a paleness delicate almost as the transparent hue that had warned her of Mabel's early doom. Oh! it was a bitter, bitter lesson for that young, full heart to learn! But notwithstanding her stunted hopes, Nelly labored with superhuman industry to suit herself to her husband in all things. Books were given up, and every hour was devoted to some domestic business; oh! with what yearnings for some little praise, at least for effort, if not accomplishment. But it seldom came; for the heart that had won hers had no real feeling in common with her, and was often cruel when perhaps not intending it. She did not blame him, however; but walling in her grief by a martyr-like endeavor to be one with him in obedience to the vows she had taken, she strove to cheat her very self sometimes into the belief that her longings after the highest intellectual life were vagaries she was in duty bound to subdue.

Raised in affluence, and taught never to have a thought

independent of his despotic father, Robert Blackburn had no business habits; and when his father failed, and he was told to "shift for himself," he had no more conception of providing for his family like a man than a child of ten years old. With the loss of property, the love of ease had not gone likewise; and consequently, inheriting his father's insane ideas of speculation, he deceived himself by his plans until debt after debt accumulated on his hands. Then, by a winning way he could easily command, he interested moneyed men in his behalf, and borrowed sums which he had no possible means of replacing, and which he squandered in expensive dress and worthless gewgaws, never once looking beyond the present. If Nelly ventured to remonstrate or entreat, a scowl or a curse was her reward; and if her mournful, patient face made him relent, he would perhaps say he had been too hasty, but that she did very wrong to irritate him; and she, broken-hearted and self-accusing, would implore his forgiveness, and condemn herself for angering him. Never once would he admit the folly of his course; and every outburst of passion was laid at her innocent feet, until at last she became a mere tool in his presence, watching every change in his face, as the beasts in a hippodrome eye the master and his whip, and directing her every word and action as his mood indicated. Yet there were seasons when he was not only ardent, but devoted; and though at such times she had to listen to some impracticable, hazardous enterprise, or receive at his hands some gift her judgment told her it was a sin for him to purchase, she shut her eyes as well as her conscience would allow, and drew from such brief seasons of affection, nectar enough to sweeten many a

bitter draught. She had won a place, too, in the stony heart of her father-in-law while she lived in his house. She was ever diligent in anticipating all his wishes, and he manifested a kind appreciation of her devotion, greater even than her sanguine heart had ventured to expect. And though she could not feel at ease in his society, she had learned to love him so much, that when he told her and her husband, after his failure, he was tired having his children dangling at his skirts, she could have buried herself in the earth to hide the grief and shame she felt. Still she went often to see him and his daughter; and by her ready tact and ingenuity, rendered the latter so much aid in repairing her expensive wardrobe, that the only change apparent was its increased elegance. And when Sylvester Blackburn boasted to his acquaintance, and in Nelly's presence, that his daughter patronized no dressmaker,—knowing as he did all the while that Nelly's skilful fingers did all her handsome work,—though she felt surprised at the falsehood implied, her services were continued faithfully and unremittingly.

CHAPTER XV.

I see the future stretch,
All dark and barren, as a rainy sea.

ALEXANDER SMITH.

It was several weeks after the marriage of her father-in-law, before Nelly was able to make them a visit in the handsome house he had rented for the year. When she went, at last, she was received with freezing coldness by Delia and her father, though Mrs. Blackburn herself was cordial and affectionate. Robert refused to go with her, for he felt annoyed at his father's marriage; and Nelly was sadly at a loss to make excuses for him, knowing it would not do to tell the truth. Her health was very feeble, and she rarely left home except to go to church or to the residence of Mrs. Arnett, only a few doors below her own. When, therefore, week after week passed, and none of her father's family came near her, she racked her brain in vain to discover some reason why. She had told Robert of their coldness the day she visited them, but he curtly said she was always trying to make trouble, and she was silenced. She went again and again, as long as her strength would allow, and though she was treated with no more respect than if she had been a servant, she forced herself to distrust every appearance calculated to make her unhappy, and never allowed the cause of her fears to escape her lips.

About three months after Mr. Blackburn's marriage, Nelly gave birth to a son. She was very ill, and though

she did not lack the tenderest nurture from her many friends, she pined for the presence of those who ought, her heart told her, to be kindest of all. "Surely they will come now," she thought, as she lay like a broken lily, watching the gentle sleep of her child — "surely they will come now. They know I have had neither mother nor sister in my sore need; and then, it is Robert's boy, and they will come for his sake, if not for mine." But they did not come.

Her child was several months old before she was able to leave the house, and the leaves were reddening, when, for the first time, one pleasant autumn morning, she went with her husband to church. Rachel Hunt, who sat in Mrs. Arnett's pew, near the door, beckoned them, as they entered, to share it with her. They did so, and shortly after Mr. Blackburn's family passed up the aisle. Nelly had caught their eye when they first came in, and half rose to speak to them as they passed, but they did not look toward her again; and when she sunk into her seat her face was covered with a crimson glow of shame. When the services were over, Rachel Hunt passed out, but Nelly asked Robert to wait. She could not feel willing to go without another effort to speak to them. They walked slowly down the aisle, and Mrs. Blackburn, who was in advance of the others, came up to Nelly and kissed her cheek.

"Why have you not been to see me?" Nelly whispered through her sobs.

"I did want to go, dear, but your father would not let me," was the low, hasty reply. Turning then, she offered her hand to Robert with a look half-smiles, half-entreaty, as Mr. Blackburn and Delia advanced. Nelly went for-

ward to kiss her sister. Delia turned her cheek condescendingly; but when Nelly extended her hand to her father, he turned abruptly away, and with a frown passed out of the church with his companions. She lifted her brimming eyes to her husband's face. The church was deserted, and the sacristan was waiting to close the doors. Robert drew her hand through his arm, and they walked home in silence.

"There is something the matter," he said, as they entered their chamber. "Father is under some wrong impression, or he would not have passed me without speaking. I must find out what it is."

"You know I told you a long time ago," Nelly said, "that he scarcely spoke to me when I met him; and Mrs. Blackburn whispered to me to-day that he would not let her come to see me. Oh, if I only dared ask him what I have done!"

She looked so weak, and sick, and miserable, Robert's heart was touched. "I will go to see him after dinner, and bring him home with me," he said, as he drew her to his knee, and ran his fingers through her long, bright curls. "There, do not cry any more. 'Tis some foolish thing, I warrant, and will be arranged without a minute's trouble."

Those kind, cheering words! Careless in tone as they were, how they fell like sunshine on her spirit!

The evening was deepening, and its shades brought out into cheerful beauty the light that blazed in Nelly's homely, but neat and pleasant parlor. On the mantel-piece a single candle was burning, but a bright wood-fire shed its ruddy light throughout the room, and chastened the nun-like beauty of the white chrysanthemums in a

small, elegant vase, her mother's parting gift, which sat on a little work-table near the centre of the room. An arm-chair, cushioned by her own hands, was drawn close to the fire; and a footstool stood near it, ready for the feet of the estranged but still beloved. She sat by the front window, watching every form that passed the gate, until at last her eager advance to open the door told that the footsteps outside were the ones expected. Sylvester Blackburn entered with his son. Nelly lifted her arms to embrace him, but his cold look repulsed her, and timidly offering him the chair she had made ready for him, she took her seat by his side. Not a word was spoken, and the silence at last grew so embarrassing, Robert requested his father to state what causes of complaint he had against Nelly, if any.

Sylvester Blackburn turned and scowled upon her. "I have many," he said. "You have been lying—you have been tattling—you have been mischief-making—you have stolen into my family like a serpent, to destroy my domestic peace, but you shall not do it," and he shook his huge fist in her face.

Nelly sat motionless with terror. Never before in her life had the slightest accusation been brought against her. Never before had any act of hers been mentioned except in praise and kindness. She had lived so retired, she had been so unobtrusive, how had it been possible for such an impression to be made as that under which her father labored?

"Tell me," she said, in a choking voice, "oh, do tell me what I have done! To whom have I lied? Whom have I striven to estrange from you, father? Who and where are my accusers?" Her startled eyes glanced

round the room, as if expecting to see demons come up out of the shadows.

"My wife is your accuser, madam," he replied. "She has told me, with all the gentleness of her angelic nature, and in bitter tears, of the foul falsehoods you have perpetrated, which have been the means of estranging her best friends from her. This might be pardonable, for your husband's sake; but you have not been satisfied with vilifying her to friends—you have done all in your power to embitter Delia's feelings toward her, and with your intimate, Rachel Hunt, a miserable thief and hypocrite, have charged her with endeavoring to ensnare the worthless fop of a preacher your sister died about, a man whom my wife detested from the first hour of her acquaintance with him. Your wickedness has extended even further than this; for Dora would be confirmed and receive the communion, if it were not that her honest heart will not suffer her to kneel at the same chancel with so corrupt a person as yourself."

Nelly arose and paced the room. After a few moments she halted suddenly before him, and said, in a trembling voice:

"God forbid, father, that I should seek to lessen your estimate of your wife. It is better you should consider me all you have said, than that my clearance should be her disgrace. I will retire from the church if I stand in her way. God is everywhere; and I shall never be at a loss to find His face."

"You need n't think you can sneak out of it so easily," he said, with a fiendish sneer, as she bent like a broken reed before him. "I will report you to Dr. Haile, if you ever open your lips about her again; and I will see that

you are spued out of the church in less time than I have taken to warn you."

Nelly looked at her husband, who had sat in the corner without speaking during the whole of this abusive speech. Would he not say one word in her defence? How utterly bereft she felt!

"Then, father," she said, "bring your accusations against me before the church, and have me excommunicated, if I deserve it. It will not do to live in this way—to go to the Lord's holy table with such feelings as you entertain toward me, and such conduct as you say mine has been. Oh!" she continued, "I have striven so hard to make pleasant and happy the home to which I came a stranger; and so far from sowing the seeds of discord among your new relations, Robert can testify that I have constantly prayed for your happiness. He knows, too, how I have implored him to discard his violent objections to your marriage, and to visit and treat your wife affectionately."

"You are a—a little mistaken, Nelly," Robert said, with evident confusion. "I did not object to Mrs. Berry, but felt sorry father was going to enter into such a connection in his embarrassed circumstances."

"There! your own husband fastens the truth of what I have said upon you," exclaimed her father-in-law, while she stood, white and still, gazing in her husband's face. Not a word escaped her; but the meaning in every marble feature, the agony of terror at the discovery of this most cruel treachery, would have stung the most palsied conscience to the quick. And Robert Blackburn felt it, winced under it, for there were gems of true excellence amid the dross and rubbish of his character; but he had

not the courage to face the anger of his father and protect the frail thing, so innocent and pure, who had no earthly succor beyond himself.

Sylvester Blackburn left the house, and when his heavy tramp died in the distance, Nelly started to her room, but sunk powerless at the door. Robert lifted her up and carried her to the bed. It was sometime before she recovered sufficiently to speak. When she did, her husband took her wasted hand, and said tenderly:

"It is very hard to bear these things, dear Nelly, but God has called us to peace."

A feeling of loathing she could not repress came over her as she withdrew her hand. "God has commanded a man to love his wife even as Christ loved the church," she thought, but dared not utter it, knowing her husband's meekness could easily be deposed by him who transforms himself into an angel of light. Robert noticed her strange manner—strange indeed, for hitherto she had always leaped to receive his lightest caress.

"What is the matter?" he said. "You seem to be in an ill-humor."

"Oh, no!" she answered, with a forced smile; for she saw the cloud of his anger gathering, and trembled lest it should burst.

"Well, I'm not going to be put off," he said. "There is something wrong, and you must tell me what it is."

"I was only thinking," Nelly replied, deprecatingly, "of your not remembering your dislike for Mrs. Blackburn."

"I did remember it," he answered, quickly; "but all I said to you about her was told in confidence, and you had no right to betray me. Any man is privileged to

deny what he has said, when persons have no authority to repeat it."

He turned abruptly from her, and taking his hat, walked toward the door. It was past midnight, and though he had often left her in his fits of ill-humor, she had never felt so terrified before.

"I regret mentioning it very much," she said. "Please come back. I will try, oh! so earnestly hereafter, never to betray you in any way."

He went back and sat down by the bed. "You know my temper, Nelly," he said, "and you have so much better control of yours, it is strange to me that you will try how much you can excite me."

"I will do better hereafter—I will indeed," she murmured entreatingly through her sobs.

"Then quit crying," he said, pettishly. "You cry too easily anyhow, and will make yourself sick again."

She smothered her grief, and talked calmly to him for some time. But when he awoke late next morning, after a long, undisturbed sleep, her unclosed eyes were fixed upon him as they had been through the long, still night. She had lived a lifetime in the last few hours, and had been well-nigh crazed by her husband's singular conduct. He had gone to his father's house, ostensibly to have an understanding with him touching his cruel estrangement; and after bringing him into her presence had appeared as a witness against her. What could have been his motive for this heart-piercing unkindness? Poor, unsuspecting child! She did not know how instantaneously his hate of his step-mother had been strangled down by his father's ireful look in the church, and that he had gone to Sylvester Blackburn's house for the sole purpose

of doing the agreeable to the new wife, knowing that was the only way of securing the favor of the parent he had been taught to fear from infancy. He knew the show of love he would manifest as a husband's duty, in his apparent effort to reconcile his father to the innocent subject of his anger, would turn all wrath from himself to her, and make her thus a fortress behind which he might safely hide; and he did not fear the consequences of such a course, for he knew she loved him, and that it would be easy to soothe the grief his treacherous conduct would cause her. He reckoned aright; for though his "principles," as he called them, were wholly antagonistic to her own, she looked only at the smiles he gave her, she remembered only his loving words, and strove as with a death-struggle to silence any suggestion her pure Christian mind might make when his conduct clashed, not openly, but the more sinfully because secretly, with the laws of truth and uprightness.

"I want breakfast early this morning, Nelly," he said, when he found she was up and dressed. "I have an engagement to go hunting with some friends, and they will be ready for me by eight o'clock."

She left the room, and with the aid of her only servant, an orphan girl of about twelve years old, she prepared the breakfast, which was soon made ready in the little parlor, their only breakfast-room.

"You are a capital cook, Nelly," he said, as he broke open the light, fair bread, and garnished it with the fresh, golden butter she had churned the day before. How her heart bounded at his cheering tones! Everything he had said the night before was forgotten, and her spirit sprung up straight and lithe, relieved of its sorrow-load, as the

slender bulrush from its weight of sleet, whose bands the first warm sunshine looses.

Nelly was busy through the morning with her many home duties, for her protracted illness had kept her sadly in arrears, and she was using double diligence to recover all that was behind. She sat half doubled over her work, for she was not strong enough to lift the heavy cloth she was sewing, from her knee. But though she looked so pale and weak, and her fingers were so transparent the very flow of the blue veins was perceptible through the fine tissue of the skin, she wrought as busily as if her strength were commensurate with her willingness, and the more cheerfully for the kind words of her husband, which had thrilled her heart with the joy of the old home-days, when every smallest good act received its meed of praise. She sat thinking of the far-gone past with a happiness soul-pervading and exquisite, though chastened by the necessity which, her husband told her, threw so very far into the future the prospect of again seeing the loved ones she had left;—chastened by this, and furthermore, and perhaps most of all, though she did not know it, by the discipline in suffering and self-abnegation to which she had been subjected since the day she left Lily Dell. Thought after thought, memory after memory—with occasionally a giant-like, shadowy suggestion, dim and vague, that would stalk across the quick-moving panorama—passed through the avenues of her busy mind, making her alike forgetful of time and place, until a lumbering knock at the front door startled her up, and brought her back to life. She laid down her work, and went to the parlor-door. A stout, burly man, with a rough but good-natured visage, nodded familiarly to her,

and without touching his hat, asked if Robert Blackburn was at home.

"He is not," Nelly replied. "He left town with a party of hunters early after breakfast, to be gone all day."

"Ding his parties!" said the man, snappishly. "He's been dodging me these two weeks, and when I pounced on him yesterday like a sparrow-hawk, he gave me his solemn word he would settle to-day at eleven o'clock, and told me I would find him here. Take this bill in to his wife, will you, and ask her if she can arrange it. I know he has plenty of money stowed away somewhere, or he would not shine as he does in his gimcrack finery."

Nelly took the note and looked over it. It was a due bill amounting to several hundred dollars, dated six months before, and payable to one of the first merchants in the place.

"Come, get in the house with it; I'm in a hurry," the man said, as she stood hesitating and embarrassed.

"I am Mr. Blackburn's wife, sir," she replied, while her face crimsoned with shame. "But I can give you no information regarding the note," she continued, "and would suggest to you to call at Mr. Markham's store to-morrow. My husband has an office there."

"I beg your pardon, indeed, ma'am," the man said, as he took the note; and bowing deferentially to her, he went rapidly up the walk, and was soon out of sight.

It was not strange Nelly should be mistaken for the servant rather than the wife of Robert Blackburn. Her dress, though clean, was coarse and faded; and in strong contrast with the elegant cloth of her husband, who, if

he ever noticed the difference in their wardrobes, satisfied himself, and her also, by saying their living depended upon the gentility of his appearance.

CHAPTER XVI.

Fresh as the first beam glistening on a sail
That brings our friends up from the under-world —
Sad as the last that reddens over one
Which sinks with all we love below the verge —
So sad, so fresh, the days that are no more!

TENNYSON.

NELLY'S feelings were very different when she re-entered her room, and gathered up the folds of the heavy cloth cloak she was making for her husband. Everything that had occurred the day before came back with a scathing distinctness, and burnt its impress upon her writhing brain. She shed no tears, but a red spot in her cheek deepened to a crimson glow, and her heart beat loud though slowly, like the stern hammer of a forge, as her needle with its silken thread sped like lightning through the black credit-purchase. There was a stir in the willow-cradle beside her, but she sat still and unobservant until the cooing voice of her baby roused her from the palsy of thought into which she had fallen. The child had kicked off the soft, home-woven blankets, and lay clutching at his plump, chubby feet, which were wantoning in their sweet freedom from the fair white wrappings, while his blue eyes sought eagerly to attract

her gaze, and his young lips lay half parted and smiling, ready to break into ripples of laughter at the first sound of the loved mother-voice.

"Baby, dear baby!" she murmured, as she lifted the precious, leaping burthen to her arms, "Baby, dear baby! Oh, if we were only dead!" and her tears gushed in torrents, and flooded the little wondering face.

"Nelly!"

She crouched by the crib, and hugging the child closer to her bosom, sobbed as if her heart would burst from her chest. Rachel Hunt knelt beside her.

"Can you not tell me what it is, Nelly? I love you very dearly," she said.

"Do you believe I am a liar, Rachel?"

There was a lurid gleam darting from Nelly Blackburn's usually serene and gentle eyes, that told of a spirit resolute and daring when driven too far; and it came out like a prophet now, giving warning for the future.

"You are truthful as light, Nelly," was her friend's earnest reply.

"Do I look like one who could be so vile and wicked as to say harm of even the very meanest creature the good God ever made?"

The fiery light had faded from her eyes, and their clear chestnut deepened into blackness with the intensity of her gaze.

"None but a fiend would dare say so," Rachel replied in a fearless tone, as she essayed to lift the young mother from the floor. Nelly arose, and still hugging her baby in a close embrace, suffered her friend to lead her to a couch near the fire.

"You must tell me what is the matter, Nelly," Rachel began. "I am older than you, and have seen more, much more of life than you ever have—until you left your mother. I love you, too, Nelly, more than any, though you have many friends; and by reason of that very love can see all your yearnings. You had a sister once, to whom your heart could turn always, without fear of a repulse. Her place cannot be supplied, I know, and I hate professions; but I feel constrained to say, I will not trifle with the confidence you are yearning to bestow, and that I will, as far as I am capable, sincerely give you the sympathy for want of which you are certainly dying."

Still holding her child in her arms, Nelly related the whole of the transactions of the day before, omitting only her husband's denial of the assertion she had made.

"And where was your husband while his father was pouring forth this filthy tide of abuse?"

"He was present, as I have said, in the beginning, Rachel; but the Scriptures command us to honor our parents, and Robert could not say anything, of course."

"I know the Scriptures command a man to leave father and mother, and cleave unto his wife," was the prompt, decided reply; "and of course"—she stopped short, and her beautiful face shone fairer and whiter, as if the pure truth of her character were changing her very flesh into its own spotless, statue-like integrity. Nelly looked up, expecting her to go on.

"Do you love your husband, Nelly?"

"How can you ask me, Rachel?" Nelly said, while her lips quivered. "Have I ever failed in any duty to him? I do love him; I do try, oh! so constantly, to serve him in every way."

"You most cordially desire to be happy with him, and to find out what course will insure to you both the greatest amount of peace?"

"Does not my whole life answer you, Rachel?"

"Are you willing, then, for me to make a suggestion to you?"

"Please say on, Rachel," and the beseeching eyes were blinded again with tears—"please talk to me. I cannot, I dare not write to mother, and you are all I have beside. What would you do, if you were in my place?"

"I could never be in your place, Nelly," Rachel replied; "why, it is not necessary for you to know. But how would it answer," she said kindly, yet half-reluctantly, for she felt the responsibility she was bringing upon herself, "how would it answer for you to tell Robert,—I will not say gently, for your heart will never let you do otherwise,—that you will be much happier if he will distinctly state to his father his belief in your entire innocence, and his determination to shield you from all wrong and insult, let the result be what it may?"

"I dare not say so, Rachel; he would leave me forever if I did. He cannot bear dictation,—and I have no desire, indeed, to dictate to him," she continued, as if frightened at the revelation her previous words had made.

Rachel Hunt watched her features with a painful look.

"Poor martyr-child," she said, as she brushed back the long curls from the innocent, upturned face, "poor martyr-child! Spirit so pure, the loftiest soul might be

proud to walk side by side with thee through life, yet bowed and crushed beneath the shackles of a most wretched destiny. Oh! if the soul's best gifts must be sacrificed, why may they not be offered at a worthier shrine?"

Nelly did not understand her, and it was well she did not; for when in after years the meaning of those few words came in all its force, her reason staggered and almost gave way beneath the appalling blow. How much worse it would have been then, if it had come in her helpless youth, while yet she had learned but the first lessons in the severe discipline of affliction?

"What was it, Rachel," Nelly asked, "that made me shrink from Mrs. Blackburn with a dread I could not overcome, from the very first time I ever saw her? Though her manner toward me was always kind enough, there was something about her so snake-like and insinuating, I shivered whenever she came near me; but she had never done me any wrong then."

"Ay, but she had," Rachel Hunt replied. "She had committed a wrong of which she was reminded whenever she came into your presence, and which she was even then plotting to consummate on your head. I have seen it in her eyes at church, when your thoughts were soaring heavenward, unconscious of the slimy viper at your feet; and I have longed to tell you all I know, that you might in some way secure yourself against her malicious venom, before she succeeded in destroying your tranquillity. But there seemed to be no way open for me, and I have been compelled to stand idle and see her machinations without making them known, or giving you any warning. You have suffered greatly, Nelly, but so have

others; and if I can secure you against trouble for the future by relating the misfortunes of another victim, lonelier than yourself, because without father or mother, or sister or brother, I will feel amply rewarded for reverting to sorrows I had expected never to mention again."

Rachel then told her own history up to the period of her flight from Oliver Berry's roof; and then slowly and with ashen lips, of her wild pursuit of Cameron into the wilderness, and her long insanity afterward. When she finished, Nelly was clinging to her, as we have seen children crouch closer to each other when listening to some frightful hobgoblin story.

"Mabel and my mother," she at last faltered, "did they know anything of this?"

"Your mother knew only that he had returned, and through the misrepresentations of an unprincipled woman, had been led to believe Mabel was dead. Mother Arnett, through Widow Donald, informed Mrs. Bracken of the circumstances, withholding only the name of Mrs. Blackburn; and she kept the intelligence not only from Mabel, but all her friends, knowing its announcement would hasten her child's death."

"And you, Rachel," Nelly said, watching her fixed white features, "how could you live under such dreadful wrongs? and most of all, how could you remain in the same place with that wicked woman?"

"I had no refuge elsewhere, Nelly. I knew not a soul in the West, away from Louisville, except Widow Donald's family, and Tom Carper. And if I had known every one in the State, I would not have gone away. I knew then as well as now, the power of those who are elevated

by wealth and station in the eyes of the world, and could, therefore, measure Dora Berry's strength by reason of her connection with Mr. Berry's family, and her own unscrupulousness. But I knew, also, that the promises of God are unfailing, and that 'He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it,' sooner or later. So I determined to remain patiently here, and prove by the uprightness of my life, the falseness of hers, yet without mentioning her name ever, except simply, and without explanation, to deny the falsehoods she continued to promulgate in her inimitable, insinuating way, wherever she thought I had friends. Not satisfied with calling me the chiefest of liars, she actually asserted that I had stolen bed-linen from Mr. Oliver Berry, and that she had seen it herself in Mother Arnett's house. This grieved me more than all the rest; and I wonder yet at the daring malignity that could attempt to stain the reputation of so excellent and blameless a person as my precious old mother. I could understand her zeal in persecuting me; and pity for her false conceptions of the best means to attain the end she desired,—which was the conquest of Edgar Cameron, who would yet return, she hoped,—so filled my heart, there was no room left for either fear or hate."

Nelly mused. "I see it all," she said; "she cannot forgive me for being Mabel's sister; she cannot forgive you for being truthful and good. And I understand now what Mr. Blackburn meant when he said you and I declared his wife loved Edgar Cameron. She, no doubt, imagined you had told me all these things, and talked to her husband accordingly. But how could you live through such trouble, Rachel?"

"Life would have been insupportable, Nelly, but for one resolute determination, sustained by a hope no adversity could destroy. I resolved to occupy every moment of my life in endeavoring to find him, that I might tell him the truth; and I believed against every counter conviction, that God would bless my efforts. After Mabel's death, I felt for a long time paralyzed; but I have continued to write to every quarter where he might possibly be; to read every printed word I see, whether in gazettes or circulars, or on stray wrappings found in the streets; and though as yet I have had no syllable of intelligence from him, I still hope and pray, God only knows how frequently, that I may live if only long enough to see him, and tell him I have never wronged him. I shall not care how soon I die afterwards."

"Poor Rachel!" Nelly said, forgetful of her own sorrows in contemplating the wrongs of her lonely friend; "you have suffered so much more than I have from that bad woman! She has only tried to injure me in the estimation of her husband and Delia, but she has maligned you to every one."

Rachel was silent. She knew Dora Blackburn had slandered her unoffending step-child even more foully than herself; but she could not tell Nelly so, for she saw clearly she had no thought of acting otherwise than in passive obedience to the wrongs her enemies were inflicting; and the revelations she might make would but increase her suffering without affording any means of making her future life more serene. From the time of Nelly's arrival in Louisville, Dora Berry had singled her out as the object upon which to vent the rancor that had festered in her heart ever since the failure of her designs

upon Edgar Cameron. She asserted, therefore, before her marriage with Sylvester Blackburn, that Nelly's extravagant draughts upon the purse of her father-in-law were the cause of his failure in business; and then knowing the plainness of Nelly's living would be a refutation of this falsehood, she doubled its enormity by saying she purloined large sums of money, which were secretly sent to her pauper mother in Fayette. After her marriage with Sylvester Blackburn, these things were all retailed in his ear; and without enquiring how Dora Berry could know so much more of his affairs than he did himself, he seized them eagerly, glad of an excuse to persecute the unsuspecting child, whose poverty had been the cause of his bitter opposition to her marriage with his son. Rachel Hunt, even in the privacy of her home, heard all these things, for there were idle gossips enough to pass them from house to house; but though with her fearless truthfulness she denied them, and openly expressed her contempt for tale-bearers, she could not silence them all, and was frequently compelled to listen.

None of them reached Nelly's ears, however; for though tattlers may be very willing to circulate the vilest scandal, they rarely have the courage to lay it before its innocent subject, and thus incur the risk of being made witnesses to what they so glibly tell in irresponsible positions; so Nelly was spared the knowledge of things that would have made even her fortitude tremble.

CHAPTER XVII.

Have I renounced my womanhood,
For wifehood unto thee?

E. B. BROWNING.

THE revelations Rachel had made kept Nelly's mind so engrossed after she had left her, she had not noticed that the day was fast waning until Sukey, the little hired girl, came in to ask if she did not want dinner prepared. Nelly looked at the clock on the mantel-piece, and was surprised to find it was past four.

"I would n't trouble you, ma'am," the girl said, "but I have to go away this evening, and want to get the kitchen nicely cleaned before I leave you."

"Why must you go, Sukey?" Nelly asked, in amazement. "I thought you would be willing to live with me always."

"And so I would, indeed, ma'am," was the honest reply, "but mother says she can't let me stay any longer. She will come for me herself, and talk to you about it."

Sukey Badger left the room in haste and embarrassment, and proceeded to scrub the tables and floor of the kitchen, for Nelly had told her she would wait until supper to break her fast. The young wife was still pondering what could be the motive of Sukey's mother in removing her, when the woman herself entered.

"I feel so grieved at the prospect of losing Sukey,

Mrs. Badger," Nelly said. "What can I do to prevail with you to let me keep her?"

Mrs. Badger pulled nervously at the fringe of her coarse worsted shawl, and seemed either afraid or ashamed to speak. She was a genteel, though very humble person, possessing a degree of delicacy common everywhere to the poor, yet seldom accorded them by those who occupy the high places of the world.

"My daughter has been with you ten months, has n't she, ma'am?" she asked, in a respectful but trembling voice.

"She has," Nelly answered—"ten months and a few days over."

"I have no means of support but the labor of my hands and hers," the woman continued, "and I live so far from town I can't get as much washing as I can do, because there are so many women more convenient to the town-people. I have to do sewing, therefore, and the long walks in search of employment take so much of my time, I am quite disheartened. The little money I make will scarcely buy victuals and clothes for the four little ones; and it's harder on me now, because they are all sick."

"Of course, then, I will not beg for Sukey to stay," Nelly replied. "You must need her at home, indeed. I only wish I were stronger, that I might be of some service to you in taking care of the children."

"It is not that, ma'am," the woman said, more and more embarrassed. "I can't take Sukey home, because I am not able, though I miss her, God knows," and the tears trickled slowly down the furrows of her weather-beaten face. "But I must hire her to some one that will

pay me for her work, and I—I a'n't able, indeed, ma'am, to wait any longer on Mr. Blackburn."

"How much is due you?" Nelly asked, with a heart-sickening sensation she could not conceal.

"You know he promised me two dollars a month," the woman resumed, "and you paid Sukey the first month's wages. I have not received a cent since, though Mr. Blackburn has promised me, nearly every week, to settle with me."

Nelly stepped to her work-table in the parlor, and stood a moment buried in thought. She knew Mrs. Badger was strictly honest, and did not for an instant doubt the truth of what she said; but how was she to act? She opened one of the little drawers, and took up a five-dollar note, which was all the money she had. "Must I give it to her?" she thought. There was nothing in the house in the way of provisions, except a half-barrel of flour, a few onions, and some preserves she had made two or three months before. But she hesitated only a moment. They had, besides the flour and other things, the good old cow, and wood enough to last two weeks longer—and the money she had no right to keep. She returned and placed it in Mrs. Badger's hand.

"It is all I have just at present," she said, "but I will send you the balance as soon as I can get it."

Mrs. Badger looked at her for a second in silence. "Will you please tell Mr. Blackburn we are very needy, and that the balance coming to us will help us very much?" she said, as she turned toward the door.

"I will," was the tremulous reply, and the mother started out. But Sukey hesitated. Little Willie lay

crowling in his cradle, and she knelt down beside it, and kissed his sweet, open mouth.

"Please don't let him forget me, ma'am," she sobbed, as she arose and offered Nelly her hand.

The baby's lips were quivering, and his blue eyes were standing full of tears when Nelly approached the crib after Sukey had passed out. He knew his faithful nurse as well as he knew his mother; and though his glad baby-laugh came back when Nelly lifted him in her arms, he looked wistfully toward the door, and his lip quivered again, for Sukey had never left him before without a romp or a song.

Evening came on, and Nelly's eyes were strained with watching for the return of her husband, when the clock struck six. He would expect supper to be ready for him, and the cow had to be milked; so she took the blankets off the crib, and throwing them over one arm, while she carried her child in the other, she went below stairs to the kitchen. The cow stood at the gate of the back lot, waiting to be let in. Nelly spread the blankets on the kitchen floor, and placing her baby on them in front of the open door, she went out and drove the cow into the yard, where she might watch her child as she milked her. It was strange, awkward work for her; for in all her mother's poverty she had never been compelled to do so menial a labor. Her eyes were full of tears, and her heart was very heavy; yet, if any one had asked her the reason, she could not have given it. She was thinking of Mabel, of Lina's terrible death, of Edgar Cameron and Rachel Hunt, and the rude, beastly attack of her father-in-law; but never once did a reproach toward her husband enter her mind. Yet if he had been all her

heart yearned for, her eyes, though they might have been dimmed by such memories, would not have been scalded by grief as they were. She did not know it, however.

A cold November mist was falling as she re-entered the kitchen with her pail of milk. Willie had fallen asleep before the fire, and drawing the blankets over him, she put away the milk and proceeded to prepare the simple supper. There was little enough to be done; and the bread was soon risen and brown. She drew the oven—light for other hands, but a heavy burthen for hers—to one side of the fire-place, and half removing the lid that the bread might not burn, she carried her child up stairs to his crib, and in a few minutes had a bright fire kindled in the parlor.

Hour after hour passed, and still she sat alone by the front window, looking out into the dim, drizzly street. The heap of fuel she had placed in the chimney-corner was nearly consumed, and the sound of footsteps on the pavement had ceased altogether, except the slow, measured tread of the night-watch. The clock struck twelve, and she shuddered while the pulses of sound vibrated through the dead silence of the house. Where could Robert be? She thought of the dense, pathless wilderness he had entered with his companions, and a dreadful fear seized her. Oh, if he would only come! And then she and Willie were so unprotected, without one soul near them, and in such a gloomy night! She crept to the hearth, and drew together the fallen and ashen brands. Then returning to the window, she closed the blinds without venturing to look again into the street, as if fearing some monster would stare her in the face;

and locking the door, while the sound of the key grating in the lock made her flesh creep, she entered her chamber, and took her station beside her sleeping child.

When the morning sun came in at the window, she was still sitting there; but a startling change had come over her. Her eyes, sleepless and clear, were sunken and girded by a purple ring, and her features looked smooth and sharpened, like those of a dead person. And reason enough was there for the change; for she had neither eaten nor slept since the cruel visit of her father-in-law. She left her dreaming boy and went down to the kitchen. The bread she had baked the night before was still sweet and fresh, and lifting it on a dish, she climbed the stairs and placed it before the fire she had rekindled in her own room. Then she went back for the milk, and brought with her a tin cup to boil a portion for Willie, for the springs in her own bosom were dry from grief and fasting.

The child lay on her lap, bubbling the milk from the spoon with cooing eagerness, while his mother fed him, when Robert Blackburn came in. Nelly looked at him, and burst into tears.

"Why, what is the matter, darling?" he said kindly, and with anxiety, for he saw the great change in her features.

"I have been so uneasy, Robert," she said, as he put his arms around her and the baby both, and kissed her cheek.

"You look sick, too, Nelly," he said. "Make Susan feed Willie, and you lie down. You look as if you had not slept for a week."

"Susan is gone," she said.

"Did her mother come for her?" he asked, but without surprise.

"Yes; and requested me to ask you to settle with her as soon as possible, for she is very needy."

"She is the most inveterate old dun in the world," he replied, testily; "and may just wait now until I choose to pay her. She thinks to head me by taking her child away, but I'll show her how much she'll make by *that* operation."

Nelly's very soul revolted at the utterance of these words, but she did not speak. She arose to lay Willie in his crib, but Robert, with the same kind tone he used when he entered the room, took the child from her arms, and she went out to make ready the breakfast-table.

"I think a slice of ham would not go amiss, Nelly," he said as he looked over the neat but beggarly table.

"I broiled the last for breakfast yesterday," she replied.

"Well, give me the money I handed you Saturday, and I will go across the street and get one from Shultz. The old Hessian will not credit, you know."

Nelly's heart came up in her throat as she said, "I gave it to Mrs. Badger;" and her eyes fell, for she could not brook the anger she saw gathering in the face so lately beaming with gentleness and affection. If his anger had burst like a tempest, she could have borne the fury of its wrath, knowing that the sunshine of good-nature would soon follow; but the gray film that came over his eyes, giving them the look of granite, and the sneer that sunk its trenches beside his slowly-dilating nostrils, gave her the same augury that the leaden sky of a long, chill winter day brings to the houseless and desolate.

"Well!" he said at last, "I suppose you will be dictating next what business I shall follow, or what price I shall pay for my boots. I prefer settling my debts myself; and I know the state of my own affairs rather better than you do. When I give you money, therefore, for home-expenses, you will please remember a wife's duty, and instead of taking my business into your own hands, attend to the occupations the Scriptures have assigned you, and look well to the ways of your household. You have been beautifully observant of them, haven't you? Not a vegetable nor a pound of meat in the store-room, and nothing on the table but a few stale biscuits, and some milk and butter. I don't wonder some men cut their throats," he continued, as he turned away from the table and started out of the house.

Nelly sprang after him. "Do not leave me, dear Robert," she begged, as she clutched at his arm, her face whiter than the chrysanthemums blooming in the centre of the mound before the porch, "I have done wrong where I meant to do right. I ought to have remembered to provide for you first, but I am forgetful sometimes."

He stood stiff and unbending, looking toward the gate with a fretful, chafing spirit.

"Please forgive me," she entreated, as the tears fell slowly on his hand. "I will, indeed I will try to do better hereafter."

"I don't see why you need ever be so meddlesome, Nelly," he said, still disposed to resist all her entreaties. "I can attend to my own concerns without your help, and I'm getting tired enough of your 'blundering,' as you call it. I'd like to know why I can't be treated as other husbands are?"

"I will not only try, I *will be* all you desire me," she still implored, "if you will only forgive me now."

"Well, let it pass," he replied; "but I must go to the store, for Markham was n't in the best humor about my hunt yesterday, and I must do double work to-day. I don't feel the most like it, neither, for we slept in a wood-cutter's cabin last night, and as it was not the warmest place in the world, I have taken a cold."

She put up her face to be kissed, but he barely touched her cheek, and hurried away, out of the gate and down the street.

CHAPTER XVIII.

All earthly hopes have perished,
And e'en thine hour of promise hath gone by,
But I would fain the fond illusion cherish
Which still in joy or sorrow brought thee nigh.

EMBURY.

It was the autumn of 1818. The whitewash had fallen from the cottage to which Nelly had been taken before the birth of her child; and its gray, sombre aspect was made gloomier by contrast with the rich green leaves and purple pods of the flowering pea-vines over the porch, silvered by the rays of the full September moon. The chrysanthemums covered all the mound in front of the little parlor window, with their beautiful white shroud; and the privet and rose bushes along the walk were grown to trees almost, for it had been three years since they were planted.

A mother led her child, a boy of three years old, toward the mound of blossoms, and gathering a sprig of half-opened buds, placed it in his hand. There was a touching melancholy in her face, heightened by the mourning dress she wore; and in the tall, slender figure and thin, sharpened features, Nelly Blackburn would scarcely have been recognized even by her mother. By her mother? Nay,—for the dead see not as we see, and Viola Bracken had already been sleeping a year beside Mabel in the old graveyard.

"Oh, pretty!" lisped the child, as he lifted the stem with its crown of snow, and held it up in the moonlight. "Willie will save it for papa," and he carefully folded the blossoms in his little apron. Nelly's eyes filled with tears.

Robert Blackburn had gone to New Orleans a year before, to attend to some business for the gentleman who employed him,—not Mr. Markham, however; his careless inattention to business had driven him from that situation long before,—and he was to have returned on the steamboat Reindeer four months afterwards. The boat had come and gone again, however, without bringing any tidings of him; and almost crazed by grief, Nelly had pined until she looked more like a ghost than a living creature. But the steamer was expected again every hour; and clinging to the slightest hope, the child's words seemed prophetic to her, bringing up tears of more than gratitude at the possibility of his early return.

The sound of footsteps on the flags made her start. She caught the boy in her arms and ran to the gate, but turned away heart-sick and disappointed, as two men passed, whose faces she could not discern in the moon-

light. She had scarcely reached the little porch, however, when the mention of her own name by one of the men drew her attention.

"But I am not mistaken," said Bill Donald, for Nelly recognized his voice; "Robert Blackburn told me the day before I left Natchez, that she had been dead six months, and that he had determined never to come back."

This, then, was the reason she had not heard from him,—this was the reason he had not returned. Dear Robert! Her heart leaped wildly as she darted to the gate to call back her old friend and schoolmate, and hear further tidings of her husband; but he had turned the corner, and was out of sight.

She took her child in her arms, and flew down the street to Mrs. Arnett's. She knew Bill had been there, and they could tell her all she longed to know.

"Where is Bill?" she asked, as she ran into Mrs. Arnett's room, where Rachel and the old woman were sitting. "What did he say about Robert?" and her large eyes were riveted on their surprised faces with a beseeching look.

"You are excited, Nelly; sit down," Mrs. Arnett said tenderly, as Rachel rose to offer her a chair.

"No, I can't sit down, but tell me quick, Mrs. Arnett, where is he?"

"Robert is well, and living in Natchez," was the sober reply.

"Why did not you tell me, Rachel? why did not Bill come to see me?"

The tears were trickling over her white face, and she looked reproachfully at the perplexed, troubled eyes of Rachel Hunt.

"It has scarcely been an hour since Bill landed off the Reindeer; and you know, Nelly, Tom Carper has been waiting here with his team more than a week, to go with him out to Fayette. Bill is in a great hurry to get on, for he has left his mother, with no protection but their negroes, away in the wilds of Louisiana, and is compelled to hurry on as fast as possible."

"But he will return by way of Louisville?" Nelly asked.

"No. He will go by land through Tennessee, along the Cherokee trail to the Tennessee river; and thence across to the Mississippi. But Tom will be back next month," she continued, seeing the grief in Nelly's face, "and he will tell you all Bill knows about your husband. The night is so fine, they have resolved to go directly on; they can reach the Possum-Hollow Tavern by one o'clock, and finish their journey to-morrow night."

Nelly stood for a moment, and then, without speaking, left the house. She never thought how strange her conduct would seem to her friends; her heart was too full of other things.

She returned to her scantily furnished room; and disrobing the beautiful round limbs of her sleepy child, slipped the soft, white night-gown over his little figure, and sung him to sleep. But there was no slumber for her eyes that night, nor rest for her delicate frame. The light of hope, strangely darkened as it was by a shadow she could not understand, shone beneath her drooping lids, with a sweeter influence than the popped wine of sleep, and the strength of an incipient purpose gave to her lax muscles a tense, eager life no calmest repose could have imparted.

The house she occupied had been bargained for by her husband three years before; but payment after payment fell due without being settled, and the owner of the property, finding the prospect worse and worse, put the house up for sale to the highest bidder a few weeks after Robert Blackburn's departure. It was purchased by a gentleman who had learned Nelly's character from Mrs. Arnett, and he rented it to her at a low rate, thus saving her the trouble of seeking another home. She had done all her housework since Robert left, and had been doing her washing for the past few months; for the small sum of money he left her was soon expended; the sale of the cow followed shortly after, to pay the physician who attended Willie during a long illness in the spring, and the little she made by her needle was barely sufficient to purchase the fewest necessities, without sparing her drudgeries which were fast destroying her life.

But no complaining thought entered her mind. Robert had said he meant with that journey to fix a firm resolve never to be tempted to improvidence again; and this one remembrance gave her a strength and cheerfulness which surprised even herself, until the time for his return came and passed. From that period her health and spirits sunk. Rachel Hunt and Mrs. Arnett insisted that she should open a school; she was so much better able to teach than to sew; but she resolutely refused, because Robert had objected to her doing so before he left, and she would do nothing in his absence which he would have condemned if he had been at home. She did not ask why he objected,—she did not question the reasonableness of his command; she only reflected that he had said "You must not," and that was enough.

Her thoughts were busy through the long, quiet night,—busy bringing up the trials that had beaten all the brightness from her young, blossoming years. She remembered how she had striven to be a daughter indeed to the hard, cold man who had wronged her,—how she had clung with a sister's love to his unprincipled daughter, who, not satisfied with showing her the most insulting rudeness whenever she met her, must needs write to dear Aunt Van Zandt, to warn her against the one she had loved next her dead step-child. And she thought how that noble, true woman-heart, feeling outraged that a stranger whom she had never seen should thus dare to traduce the innocent, had responded to the ill-conceived letter, and had bravely asserted her love for the wronged and accused; and she remembered the dear, motherly words written by that never-withheld hand, re-assuring her of changeless affection, despite all the efforts of the unholy. Dear Aunt Van Zandt! Mother now to the motherless Lu and Amy, and supplying, with all the truth of her loving nature, the place of the broken-hearted dead.

She thought how bereft and miserable she had been since Robert went away,—wanting money often to buy the barest needs through the day, and shuddering by night at every sound, having no soul near her but little Willie lying close in her bosom. She remembered how she had longed for some one to sympathize with her in her anguish while her boy lay ill so long, and her father-in-law and his beautiful new wife dashed by in their brilliant equipage every afternoon, without even bowing to her, as she looked up to them through the open window by her sick baby's crib, willing to forget, as she had for-

given, the cruelties they had heaped upon her, if they would only speak to her then in her bitter need. She recalled with gratitude the kind stranger hands that had ministered to her in her extremity, but she shuddered at the thought that those who should have sheltered her under their own roof-tree, had left to strangers the holy offices which should have been their joy. And then came the memory of their own peaceful Lily Dell, where no discord ever was heard in the sweet home-music,—where no fevered brow ever was denied the caress of cool, pleasant fingers,—where no grieved heart ever asked for sympathy without receiving measure more than mete, and where all the ministrations of Love gave to the humility of Poverty a rare and heavenly beauty. Oh that Lu and Amy, the only links left of the broken household chain, might come to her now! But no. They were living in content and peace with Aunt Van Zandt; and though they knew to some extent the wrongs she had suffered at the hands of her father-in-law's family, they never dreamed but that he who painted such a glowing future for her before she left their play-grounds, supplied her delicate limbs with the softest cushions of luxury, and breathed into her ear all the harmonies of happiness.

When the morning light looked in at the window of her little room, it was greeted by a smile radiant as its own; for the groping spirit had found a path at last, and with the eagerness of a hunted doe, panted to fly to the gurgling streams whose musical flow it already heard breaking through the dreary wilderness of sorrow. She would go to him, dear Robert! She would sell her small stock of furniture for money enough to pay her passage to Natchez on the steamboat, which would be down from

Pittsburg in five weeks more; during which time she could do sewing enough to pay her board and purchase a genteel suit of clothes for herself and Willie. Yes, she would go to him, oh with what impatient joy! How he must have grieved to hear she was dead! But she would go, and give peace to his heart again. What though he had been cross sometimes? It was because of his pecuniary misfortunes, and she would go to strive again, as she had always done, to lighten his cares by her cheerful, willing aid. But then she remembered he had once upbraided her for returning to him before he had sent for her, when Willie was but a year old. He had sent her to the country for the child's health, to remain several months; but at the end of three weeks her baby was so ill she hurried back to lay her head on his knee, and pray that the child might live,—and he met her sternly, and rebuked her for coming without his permission. She did not dream that a rounder, rosier cheek than hers—well, she remembered all this, and hesitated. But then Bill Donald's words came up again, and choking down the feeling that made her waver, as if it had been the prompting of the Evil One, she resolved to go.

After she had finished her simple meal of toast and milk, she took her child by the hand, and locking her door, started again to Mrs. Arnett's. She had scarcely left the gate, however, when she met Rachel Hunt.

"Come, go back with me, Rachel, will you?" she said eagerly. "I have so much to tell you and Mother Arnett, and so many plans to arrange."

"I will," Rachel replied, without seeming to notice the enthusiasm of Nelly's manner. "I would have followed you last night, but a second thought suggested the

expediency of leaving you to your own reflections, at least —"

Nelly waited a moment for her to go on, but she remained silent.

"At least what, Rachel?"

"I had no right to say what my heart prompted, Nelly," she replied, "for I knew of no fact to justify my suspicion; and besides, gratuitous advice is generally the worst received of all charities."

"You are provoked about something, Rachel," Nelly said sorrowfully. "Have I ever given you reason to think I would not listen to anything you might say?"

"Never, never once, Nelly," was the sincere reply. "I am indeed provoked, as you say; but not with you. Circumstances arise sometimes though, which, despite what the preachers say, are not directed by Providence; and I feel almost angered when I see noble, God-enfranchised souls made slaves to them, from the mistaken opinions of the world, rather than the convictions of their own pure consciences. You do not understand me, I know," she continued, as she noticed Nelly's puzzled look, "and I cannot explain myself. Let what I have said, however, be my apology for a seeming severity."

"Will you give me the advice you hesitated to offer last night, then, Rachel?" Nelly asked, as they entered Mrs. Arnett's door.

"Yes, if I think best to do so, after hearing your plans."

It was not long until they were imparted.

Mrs. Arnett and Rachel both remained silent some time after Nelly had finished the narration of her projects.

"But you have not told me if you will board me and

Willie, Mother Arnett," Nelly said timidly, half fearing a refusal, by the expression of her face.

"I will," the old woman quickly responded. "I am glad you have concluded to give up the house. You are much too young to be left alone, as you have been, and I know Rachel will cheerfully share her room with you."

"I have wished for a long time," Rachel said, "to propose the step you contemplate now, Nelly; but mother has always persuaded me not to do so."

"Oh, I am so glad then," Nelly replied, with a child's joyousness; "I can get ready to go so much better now than I could with strangers, or even with you, if you seemed unwilling to take me. Tell me now what you think of all my plan, Mother Arnett," she said, as she knelt down beside the old woman, and laying her head on her knee, looked up with the unsullied innocence of a loving spirit into her kind, dim eyes.

"We will talk about that, my child, after you come to live with us," she said. "Make your arrangements to sell your household wares as soon as possible, and when all those things are off your mind, we will talk about anything you choose."

"I think Schultz the baker will buy my things," Nelly said—"all but my work-table and chair; I want you and Rachel to have them. I was at the Bakery for bread yesterday, and he said he was going to furnish his new house, and had promised his wife that he would buy furniture like mine. She was in both my rooms often when Willie was sick, and knows just what I have. You know how good she has been to me, and how faithfully she watched over us both when Willie was so sick and I so—so heart-broken."

She hid her face in Mrs. Arnett's lap; and sobbed aloud. Willie lay beside a large pet cat on the bright hearth-rug, shouting with merry laughter as it played with his long, beautiful curls. It was too much for Rachel Hunt. She looked at the crushed child-mother and the frolicking babe for a moment, and then hurried from the room. *She* knew, though Nelly did not, that it was not the memory of Lili Schultz's goodness alone that brought those sobs from the depths of her spirit; and with the feeling of one who sees a child on the brink of a chasm, but is powerless to move or speak, she sought her room and paced the floor until Mrs. Arnett called her back.

"I have told Nelly you will go with her to see Schultz, dear," she said, when Rachel re-entered the room. "Her little heart is too full to talk to him, and you can make as good a bargain as herself, I reckon. You had best go at once, too, because he is ready to buy, and may purchase all he wants before he hears anything about Nelly's things. I will keep Willie with me until you come back."

The bargain with the baker was soon concluded: before the day closed, Nelly's effects had been transferred to the German's new house, with the exception of the chair and table, and a few other articles of no value to any one but herself; and before supper-time she was snugly seated with Rachel in her pleasant room at Mrs. Arnett's. There was even more warmth than usual in the kind manner of her friends; but there seemed to be a studied avoidance of the subject of her departure, whenever she alluded to it, which pained her exceedingly; and, added to the excitement of breaking up the home associations of the past three years, it threw a chill over her feelings

which saddened her deeply, and created a feeling as if she were not altogether welcome. Rachel Hunt observed it, and guessing its cause, determined not to wait, as she had intended, until Nelly should become measurably accustomed to the change, but to come at once to the subject she had resolved to propose at least, if not to urge.

"Suppose you and I open a school, Nelly," she said, as they sat in Mrs. Arnett's room after Willie had been put to bed. "The room next to mother's is seldom used, and I know we could get a full school. Several persons want me to teach this coming winter, and if you will promise to assist me, I will make arrangements to begin at once."

"But I can't, you know, Rachel," Nelly replied. "I would have to give it up in four or five weeks, for the boat will certainly be back by that time; and it would be wrong to get scholars and then send them away so soon. I know it is much more pleasant to teach than to sew; but I can get work from Mrs. Carter that will be very entertaining and more profitable than teaching; for I will do the embroidery for those cloaks she wants made to send to Cincinnati."

Rachel hesitated, but at last spoke out in a firm, though gentle tone:

"If I were you, I would not go to Natchez, Nelly," she said. "Write to Robert, and tell him you desire to go to him; but do not start until you hear something more definite."

Nelly was startled; not so much by the words themselves, as the deliberate, calculating manner in which they were spoken.

"Why, he is my husband, Rachel," she said. "How

could I hesitate to go to him, and what would he think of me if I were to write simply, when he has so long considered me and Willie dead? The only thing that could deter me, would be the probability that he is not able to receive me; but I know that is not the case, for I heard Bill say he said he never meant to return to Louisville, and he would not have said so if he had not been prospering there. Oh, no! Nothing can induce me to change my mind. I know everything there is rough and strange, but I shall not feel lonely nor afraid; and I do not care what hardships I may have to encounter, if I can only be with him again."

Mrs. Arnett and Rachel looked at each other in silence, but from that day not a word was spoken by either, in reference to her determination. Rachel opened her school, as she had proposed, and Nelly wrought busily with her needle day and night, resolved, though Mrs. Arnett steadily refused to charge her for her board, to make an ample equivalent for the goodness of her friends.

CHAPTER XIX.

How the spirit clings
 To that which once it loved; with the same feeling
 That makes the traveller turn from his way
 To look upon some boyish haunt, though dark
 And very desolate grown, no longer like
 That which was dear to him.

L. E. L.

"You have never yet told me how Tom Carper got his fortune," Nelly said to Rachel Hunt a few days before the expected return of the Reindeer from Pittsburg.

"You know his father was a native of Ireland," Rachel replied. "He came to America with Tom's grandfather shortly before the battle of Lexington, being then a youth of seventeen or eighteen years of age. He had a brother two years older than himself, who left Ireland in a whaling vessel at the time of his migration to this country."

"Oh, yes, I often heard Bill and Tom talk about him, when I used to visit Widow Donald," Nelly said, "and felt so much interest in their conjectures as to his probable fate."

"Well, about a year ago, an old decrepit man landed at Jamestown off a Spanish brig from the West Indies. He immediately sought the dwelling of Tom Carper's aunt, who you know lives at Jamestown, and made himself known to her as the brother she had so long mourned. He had left the whale-ship a year after his departure from Ireland, and had lived in the wilds of South America from that time until a year before, when, feeling certain

of the approach of death, a wish to see his brother and sister haunted him so continually, he resolved to seek them, and embarked at Lima in a ship bound for the West Indies. There he took a brig for Jamestown, having learnt from the Captain that his sister resided there; and arrived as I have said, but was so enfeebled by age and travel he died a few weeks after, leaving to his sister and brother each the sum of ten thousand dollars, the fruits of his labors in the silver mines of Potosi. Before the news either of his arrival or his death reached Fayette, Tom's father had died; and the mail that brought intelligence of the old man's long-lost brother, contained also another letter announcing his death, and enclosing a copy of his will. Tom went on to Virginia immediately, to receive his share of the bequest; and upon his return invested the greater part of the money in lands between Louisville and Lexington, on the road proposed for the mail route. It was a fine investment, too; for it has scarcely been a year since he purchased the tract of land lying at the Wilderness Forks, and he told me, when he was here, he had sold a part of it to Mr. Sylvester Blackburn for nearly three times its cost, and even then at a lower rate than lands are bringing near it."

"Has Mr. Blackburn left town?" Nelly asked.

"Not yet; but he has purchased this property, Tom says, with the intention of building on a part of it. He will reserve the rest to be sold hereafter in lots, as he thinks it is a pleasant distance from town—five miles—for summer residences, and many persons may be induced to purchase there. Bill Donald is trying to induce Tom to sell all his lands, and go to Louisiana near him; and I sometimes fear he may succeed. They have always

been as intimate as brothers, and Tom does not like the prospect of being separated from the only male companion he ever cared for in his life. Though very noble-hearted and affectionate, he is naturally taciturn; and his sensitiveness amounts almost to a disease. Bill, therefore, is the only being he has ever known, with the exception of Mother Arnett, who seemed to read his curious nature aright; and in proportion as his interest in others has died out, his love for Bill has deepened; till he appears puzzled to decide now, whether to remain with us or follow the bent of his friendship for Bill—which is encouraged, too, by a love of adventure—and go to Louisiana. I hope he may not go, however; for Mother Arnett has always esteemed him as a son.”

“May he not prevail on her to go with him?” Nelly asked. “Widow Donald is gone; and it seems to me she would be much happier there than here; and then, if she goes, maybe Tom will be able to induce somebody else to accompany him,” she continued, archly. “Who knows but my best friends in Louisville may yet be my neighbors somewhere else?”

“Your jokes are groundless, Nelly,” Rachel said, “if they are meant for me. I shall never marry any one, and least of all Tom Carper, though I love him very dearly.”

“Forgive me,” Nelly said, awed by the severe seriousness with which Rachel spoke, and feeling as if she had committed an almost unpardonable offence; for she well knew Tom Carper’s inferiority to Rachel in everything except goodness of heart—“forgive me, Rachel. I might have known better than to jest with you about him.”

“There is no wrong done, Nelly,” Rachel replied. “I

might marry Tom Carper and be very happy; and I dare say the world would call me a simpleton for refusing a person of his acknowledged worth. Many persons have lived through long lives peacefully together, between whom there have been greater disparities than between Tom Carper and myself. But I cannot see how a woman can be happy with a husband whose mental lack makes her feel continually that when her eyes would be upraised by the impulses of her clinging nature, they must be cast down; nor can I conceive how it is possible for all the good qualities in the human heart to compensate for the absence of that greatest of all joys to a woman, the consciousness that the one she has chosen out of the whole world is indeed the stronger, not only physically, but in all the vigor of a loftier intellect.”

“What, Rachel! not if he is good and loving, and cherishes her with all the tenderness of his nature?”

“No, not even for all these. She may be tranquil and content, and even imagine herself happy, but there will always be an unsatisfied feeling deep in her soul, unacknowledged, perhaps, even to herself, but still there, gnawing like the worm in the rose’s heart.”

“I do not think so,” Nelly said in a trembling tone, while her head bent lower over her work to conceal the tears that were blinding her eyes; “I do not think so. I believe a wife may be perfectly happy with her husband, even if his mental faculties are not so brilliant as hers, if he is always affectionate and appreciative.”

“But the difficulty lies just there, Nelly. Can a man be ‘appreciative,’ when he is not possessed of the faculty to judge of mental excellence? I should greatly fear to risk such a union, I assure you. A husband in such a

case may give his wife sincere admiration ; but a woman's heart asks for more than this. She must have a full co-operation in all her enterprises, and the assurance that the encouragement she receives is the result of a knowledge of her ability to execute, or she will flag and faint often in spirit, though her lips may never say so."

Nelly shook her head. "I do believe," she said, while her voice faltered with emotion, "I do believe a woman's heart can be fully satisfied, can even *rejoice* in the possession of an affection which, even if there be small capacity to seek with her the highest objects of human knowledge and research, will offer no obstacles to her labors, but will give the noble encouragement her nature craves. Why Rachel, one single look of love will compensate for days and weeks of coldness and neglect; how much more, then, for that smaller lack we have just been discussing?"

"One single look of love would never compensate *me* for days of coldness and neglect," Rachel Hunt said warmly. "I should — but no matter."

"You do not know what you would do, Rachel," Nelly replied. "You have never filled a wife's place yet; and though you are older than I am, you will excuse me for saying it is much easier to declare, 'I would do thus and so,' in certain positions, than to do what we have threatened. You would not marry without giving your whole heart to your husband, I have heard you say more than once. Think of it, then, Rachel—if, after leaving all you loved, and uniting yourself to one by a tie holier and more binding than every other, the breaking of which, even when God's word sanctions it, is followed by suspicion and scandal even to the most inno-

cent,—if after all this you should discover that your love had been given to an ideal character,—that the being you had promised, under the poised wings of the listening archangels, to love and cleave to even unto death, was not possessed of the qualities whose specious counterfeit won your confidence,—you would not so readily say, I will not bear this nor that, but, broken-hearted though you might be, you would, instead of turning away from him, turn rather from the realities forced upon you, and blinding your eyes to all wrongs and disappointments, search for, and magnify every good quality, thus making a sure indemnity for all losses. The devotion of a true heart is not so easily taken away from its object as you may suppose. Wait until you are a wife, and then let's hear what you will say," she continued, as she looked up in her friend's face with a painful effort at a smile. "It is very easy, Rachel, for persons to say what the causes of matrimonial unhappiness are, and how they may be remedied. But such persons forget they are mere spectators, and that what they see of such conditions is rarely a moiety of the truth. How, then, can they frame a reliable guide-book through a labyrinth whose intricacies they have never explored, of whose quicksands and quagmires no one can have the remotest idea, save the poor sufferers struggling to find the yearned-for abode of peace? It will not do to say, I have experienced thus and so, and am, therefore, capable of advising. There are no two natures alike, and consequently, no two experiences; for what would be a blessing to you, might prove a curse to me. The only Infallible One has set up the only infallible standard; and where even the most trifling injunction is disregarded by either party,

the floodgates of unhappiness will burst, and deluge every hope. Let us not, then, say what might or might not be best. Theorizers have talked, and written, and died; and I doubt if the marriage relation has been benefited by them in any degree. It is too late to say what course should be pursued after the irrevocable vows are taken; and I do believe nine-tenths of the cases of unhappiness in married life arise not from any intentional wrong on either side, but a heart-rending disability to turn back the deep-rushing currents of one nature, so as to make them flow with another entirely dissimilar in character, and contrary in tendency."

"Then," said Rachel, earnestly, "let the parents of youth study, under Divine guidance, the dispositions and talents of their children; let them instil into their hearts a love of all that is pure and good, with that heavenly charity that 'thinketh no evil;' let them teach them the terrible sin of taking the holy marriage vows before they fully comprehend their meaning, or are satisfied, because convinced by a thorough knowledge of the habits and temper of the chosen object, that no temptation will arise to lead off affections so solemnly plighted, no adverse circumstances destroy the faith which should be planted in a soil that will nourish it into increasing vigor and beauty. If mothers could be convinced that their daughters have not accomplished their destiny when they have found a husband, but have then only crossed the stile leading to the wide, unknown fields of life, they would shudder to see them go from the shadow of the roof-tree; and the wedding-night would be one of fasting rather than festivity."

"Yet even in marriages where there has been but little

forethought, Rachel," Nelly said, "there may be, there doubtless are, elements enough of good, to nurture into strong, beautiful life the fairest fruits of happiness if they are only fostered and encouraged."

"I would not, if I could, change your convictions, dear," Rachel replied with mournful tenderness. "I wish sometimes I could be as you are myself. But with me, every thing must be submitted to the scrutiny of cold, inflexible reason; and if it will not prove fine gold to the touchstone, it is at once rejected without pain or regret, because it has not been allowed a place in my heart. I, therefore, speak truly when I say I can never be so situated that one kind word may be extended me as a peace-offering for past wrongs; for I never had, I never can have, a favorite so unworthy as to betray my trust so grossly. I must be able to say why and what I love, and my affection must be grounded upon such qualities of mind and heart as carry their own proof into the presence of the good and discerning every where. But there are natures, and yours is one of them, Nelly, whose imagination colors all things with hues not properly their own, thus precluding the possibility of clear-sightedness on any subject connected with their interests or attachments. We are told that such persons magnify every thing, joy and grief alike, thus being constantly tossed from extreme to extreme, and rendered incapable of making happiness either for themselves or others. This is, no doubt, true in many cases, but not in yours," she continued in a softer tone, for Nelly had dropped her work, and sat listening with her eyes bent on the floor, as if she had been receiving some severe but merited rebuke.

"Not in mine, Rachel?" she murmured, as she drew nearer to her friend and rested her head on her shoulder.

Rachel looked at her a moment in silence. There was a volume of meaning in that simple, trembling enquiry; and the large tears that gathered under her long, drooping lashes, and fell slowly over her suffering face, like diamonds from the very depths of her self-searching spirit, told their own story.

"I know all your thoughts, Nelly," she said at length. "I know more than you yourself imagine. You are this moment trying to accuse yourself of wrongs you never dreamed of committing, in the hope of finding thereby an apology for wrongs you have suffered. I do say, I do mean, that your imagination never leads you to injure any one but yourself; and I do not know a human being who could have borne the trials you have borne as cheerfully as you have done. And it is not that you have so much fortitude; it is because your imagination, buoyed by hope, turns you from misfortunes of every kind, into a future that will be fair and joyful, enabling you thus to bear the burthen of to-day in the fancy that to-morrow will bring a guerdon of blessings. I will venture to say you have never, since you were fifteen years old, found half the happiness in the present that you have looked for in the future."

"But that is a fault of my organization, Rachel," Nelly replied, "and I have long been striving diligently to overcome it. I ought to be happy, as life is, and not be constantly living in the time to come, for it unfits me for present duties."

Rachel Hunt knew very well those words were uttered by rote, pretty much as a child repeats the first lessons

it learns from a hard task-master, without any understanding of their meaning, but fully satisfied they must be enunciated with a certain tone and emphasis.

"I know it is *no* fault of your nature," she rejoined. "I know it has kept you alive through troubles that would have driven me mad. If your mind had had any tendencies toward despondency, you would have been dead long ago; but the enthusiasm and hopefulness of your nature have brought you a harvest of blessings from fields which would have been bare to others, bare of all things except a plentiful crop of thorns and thistles. Nelly Blackburn, I do believe an archangel would commend you without reservation, for your untiring, cheerful efforts to make every thing happy around you, since I have known you at least."

"Do not talk so, please, Rachel," Nelly said, winding her arms closer around her friend's neck, as if in terror at the strange vehemence of her language, "do not talk so. It is wicked to say that angels can ever look without blame on our human conduct, and least of all upon mine; for surely if my life had been so worthy as you say, the fruits of it would have been manifested before this time."

"And so they have been to all but—to all your friends, Nelly; and it is not wicked to give honor to whom honor is due. It is mere *cant* that makes oversanctimonious people say we can do nothing worthy of praise or reward in the sight of heaven. The dwellers there are much more likely to give us what our own reason teaches us is our meed for well-doing, than the purblind, saintly hypocrites of this world, and much more likely to be merciful to our short-comings. When our Lord

looked upon the woman taken in adultery, and heard the outcry of the vile rabble uttering the holy words of the law in pretence of righteous indignation, eager to execute its sentence upon her with their fiendish hands, He, the Lord God of the Universe, 'before whom angels bow, and archangels veil their faces,' looked at her bowed, degraded figure,—degraded by man, the *stronger*, whom He created to be her guide, and support, and safeguard,—and in the words which only a God could utter, said, 'Let him that is without sin among you, first cast a stone at her.' Shall we, then, allow our spirits to be swayed by the *ipse dixit* of our fellow-creatures, and suffer and rejoice, sit still or act, as their opinions or caprices dictate, when we have one unerring Teacher, the Word of Him who spake as never man spake; and one undeviating compass to guide all our thoughts and actions, the Reason He has given us by which to prove all things, and hold fast that which is good?"

"But there are so many different interpretations given to the Word of God, Rachel, and so many different ways of reasoning about it. How are we to know what is right?"

"There can be but one meaning given to God's moral laws, just as there can be but one result to any problem in Astronomy, Algebra, or Geometry, though we may use various methods to obtain it. The laws of Morality and Reason are as indestructible and harmonious as the laws of outward, visible Nature; and any question in religious deportment can be proven by them as clearly as we can explain and prove the rule for the cube root. It is worse than wicked to force our mere opinions upon others, as if they were binding moral requisitions; and there does

not live the human being whom I would allow to influence me against any act that did not conflict with acknowledged Truth. And I care not how devoted I might be to a beloved object, the very moment I became convinced of his determination to set bounds to my thoughts and actions, I would without hesitation break a connection which could be productive of nothing but misery to both. I do not mean to advocate the doctrine that we should not exercise forbearance and the most extended charity toward all persons; but we have no greater right to inflict pain upon ourselves by submission to injustice, than we have to give suffering to others by acting unjustly. It is very beautiful and romantic, the story of hearts breaking on account of silent, uncomplaining grief for wrongs God never intended they should suffer; but it is quite another thing to bear their sufferings and submit to their martyrdom; and I consider all such persons suicides in the most pitiable sense."

"You talk strangely, Rachel," Nelly said, as she lifted her head and watched the calm, firm features of her friend's face, "and I could never agree with you, I am sure. I would die, if Robert should ever be cruel to me. I could never give him up, even if he were to become the meanest of God's creatures."

"Heaven grant you may never have the trial, dear child," Rachel replied in an earnest tone. "The very thought makes me shudder, that you, utterly lacking in self-reliance as you are, and needing praise and encouragement in the smallest affairs of life, should ever be made to depend upon yourself solely for happiness, and comfort, and strength. But the time may come, Nelly, when you will be left as lonely as I have been, to stare Life in

the face, with too stern a knowledge of its stony relentlessness, to deceive yourself into the belief that the Sphinx may prove a seraph."

"What do you mean, Rachel?"

"I mean that you should be learning *self-reliance*; not as regards your work-day existence,—you have no need of tuition therein; you should be learning that most necessary of all lessons to a woman, the importance of finding your chief springs of happiness in your own bosom; to fear nothing but the displeasure of heaven,—to look no where else for guidance or strength. The vine that reaches out its timid tendrils for support, is oftener trampled under foot than upheld; while the young pine tree, with its single, delicate stem, rises above briars and thorns, and the feet of every prowling beast, seeking only the pure, clear upper heaven, and strengthening with every wind and tempest."

A vague, half-prophetic meaning in Rachel's words kept Nelly awake long after the moon, which looked down upon her kneeling figure as she prayed by her child that night, had sunk behind the hills. But failing to read its significance, she fell asleep with the same hopeful anticipations which for days past had woven into one golden woof, her thoughts by day, and her dreams by night.

CHAPTER XX.

Sleep, the ghostly winds are blowing,—
The moon is hid, no star is glowing,
The river is deep, and the tide is flowing
To the land where you and I are going;

We are going far

Beyond moon or star,

To the land where the sinless angels are!

The world is cruel,—the world's untrue;
Foes are many, and friends are few;
No bread, no work, howe'er we rue,
What is there left for us to do,

But fly, fly,

From the cruel sky,

And hide in the deepest deeps,—and die!

PROCTOR.

ONE cloudy night in November of the same year, a little boat was pushed off from the shore of Natchez by the delicate hand of a woman. It floated slowly down the river, carried hither and thither by the fitful, ever-changing will of the eddying current; for its occupant, if she had ever known any thing of rowing, was either so lost in thought or regardless of danger, she let the oars lie idle at her feet. A beautiful child slept on her bosom, murmuring in the sweet, untroubled sleep of infancy, and laughing aloud in his pleasant dreams. How strangely the low, gleeful voice floated above the complaining sigh of the water as the canoe rippled its dark bosom. Long flying clouds, like shreds of a pall, were sweeping across the sky, tossed and rent by the viewless hands of the

howling, maniac winds, and revealing by glimpses the pale, affrighted face of the young moon crouching lower and lower out of sight; while here and there a star, like the wide-open, wondering eye of a child, looked out for a moment, and then, terrified, hid itself again.

They floated on through the long, blustering night, sometimes savagely interrupted for a moment by an opposing snag, or gliding side by side with some uprooted tree,—lone, silent, but eloquent exile from far-off Northern woods,—while the child still slept, and the mother, rigid and white as marble, sat gazing into the dark with a vacant, idiotic stare. Morning dawned, and the day advanced, and the boy awoke and prattled to her, and plashed in the water with his tiny hand, and shouted as the white gulls flew overhead, and drew up his rosy mouth in a quaint baby-effort to mimic the wild piping of a crane in the tangled brake along the shore; but she stirred not until he asked for bread. Then, as if a thunderbolt had struck her, she lifted the oar, and securing it on the row-lock at the end of the boat, she strove to reach the shore. All day she labored with one arm, while she held her boy in the other; but her little strength was nothing, opposed to the refractory current; and when night came, and the child said in the half-formed words of infancy, "Take me home, mamma," her hand, as if palsied, fell from the oar, and her wild cry rang over the water and came back to her from the dark woods like the mock of a demon.

"Take me home, please take me home, mamma," and the chubby, dimpled hands dallied beseechingly with the long, untended curls that swept over her face like a tempest.

Night came again, clear, and still, and starry. They were yet on the broad, turbid river, for the mother's strength was spent, and she could make no further effort to land. Her boy fell asleep, and lay calm and unmurmuring through the long, silent hours. There was no laughter parting the lips, no smile on the sweet, quiet face; as if childhood's wants and losses had gone with his baby-heart even into the world of dreams. She drew the skirt of her dress over him, and sat watching the changes on his features until another sun came up through the Indian summer haze, red and fiery, like a cruel task-master. The child opened his eyes, and looked with strange earnestness into her face. There was no elasticity in the young limbs now, and he tossed restlessly on her knee. A fever had set fire to his veins, and in low, tremulous murmurs, he still begged to be taken home. *Home!* Oh, if it were no sin to plunge with him into the enticing river! Why, oh, why had she so madly left that fearful place, with no thought of food, or raiment, or shelter? And yet how could she stay there? No one was there to pity her, no one to give her a crust of bread; and how could she, with her gentle manners and genteel dress, expect to be offered charity, or to be looked upon, with a young child in her arms, without suspicion? And to be suspected of aught that was not pure—oh! was it strange she leaped into that frail canoe in her crazy grief, and pushed off, she knew not, cared not whither?

The day advanced, and the fever in the child's veins raged fearfully. She dipped water from the river in the hollow of her hand, and his parched lips sucked it up with spasmodic eagerness, while his delirious eyes looked

up gratefully to her own. She bathed his hot temples, and lifting the oar again, put forth all her strength to reach the shore, where the shadows of the live-oaks hung so cool and pleasant over the water. Hour after hour she toiled, pausing only to bathe the child's head and slake his insatiable thirst; and just as the sun was setting, the current, sweeping coastward, aided her feeble efforts, and the skiff floated into a little cove hollowed by the washing of under-currents. But the bank was steep and high, and it was impossible to climb it, even if she had had strength. She took a small black scarf from her neck, and tying one end of it through a staple at the bow of the boat, fastened the other to the long cane-roots that were thrust like bony fingers from the blue, loamy bank. The wind sung softly through the trees bending from the shore, and a mocking-bird in a bay-tree overhead mimicked the song of the field-lark so exquisitely, the child awoke from the fitful sleep into which he had fallen, and laughed out merrily. The fever was gone, and with it the artificial strength that had kept him tossing all day; and he lay listening to the bird until his eyes grew heavy and dim.

"I'm sleepy, mamma," at last he murmured; "sing to me about Jesus."

She drew him closer to her bosom, and in clear, trembling cadences sung:—

"Jesus, Saviour of my soul,
Let me to thy bosom fly,
While the raging billows roll,
While the tempest still is high.
Hide me, oh, my Saviour, hide,
Till the storm of life be past!
Safe into the haven guide—
Oh, receive my soul at last!

"Other refuge have I none—
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee!
Leave, oh, leave me not alone!
Still support and comfort me!
All my trust on Thee is stayed,
All my help from Thee I bring;
Cover my defenceless head
With the shadow of Thy wing!"

The child had grown so heavy while she sung, she softly relaxed her embrace, and laid him on her knees. But the lifeless fall of the yielding arms startled her; and with a crazed, imploring look, as if she would pierce the very heavens, she gathered her dead child in a wild embrace, and while the blood from her uncomplaining lips blurted him in the face, she fell with her stricken lamb into the water.

But a fiercer plunge parted the still waters of the river, and a stout Indian caught her sinking figure, and swimming vigorously round an arm of the little cove to a spot where the bank was less precipitous, leaped ashore, and laid her on a bed of dry magnolia leaves. Then springing again into the water, he sought the body of the child. Its long curls had been caught in the boughs of a young elm-tree just fallen into the water, and its white face gleamed amid the red foliage as the moonlight fell on it through the boughs of the trees on shore. With the delicate skill of a woman, the Indian unwound the dripping tresses, and lifting the light burthen to his shoulder, in a few minutes placed it beside the still insensible mother. Then taking from a young chinquapin-tree a blanket of scarlet cloth embroidered with beads and feathers, he carefully covered the bodies with it, and strode rapidly away into the woods.

Guard her, oh Nature and most solemn Night! Ever, as the young white lotus bends to the singing water, have her pure heartstrings vibrated to your many voices. There are no mother-tears to anoint and so sanctify her sorrow—there is no gentle gaze to open, by the magic of Love's mighty magnetism; the lids of those sealed and faded eyes—there is no fond kiss to warm into life and bloom those pale and purpling lips. Let the dew then fall like a blessing, mournful and holy, upon her pulseless forehead—let the clear starlight touch her eyelids, and weave its silver threads among their dark, wet fringes—let the night-wind kiss her unresponsive lips, and whisper above her like a mother's blessing. She hath nothing, nothing left but ye, oh Night and Nature! Yet nay—she hath indeed One Friend—One who is a refuge from the wind and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, and the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

When the rising sun parted the night's dusky curtains and peered into the wilderness, his beams fell on an Indian wigwam about a furlong from the river. It was built, after the manner of the ancient Natchez Indians, of young willow-saplings interwoven, and cemented with a plaster made of loam and moss. But the square windows on each side, with their blinds of sheep-skin—the wooden chimney at the back, and the stoop in front, which was formed of stakes and thatched with palmetto, gave token of the usages of the Cherokee and the white man.

On a bed of buffalo-skins in the centre of the hut lay the young female who had been rescued from the river. An old Indian woman near the fire-place, was preparing

a wholesome drink by dissolving copal balsam in cool, fresh water; and beside her stood the Indian who had saved the wanderer, holding a small mug of earthen-ware to receive the beverage. When it was ready, he filled the little vessel from the mouth of a tankard in which his mother had prepared it, and drew near the bed whereon the sufferer lay.

"Will the White Mocking-Bird drink the medicine of the Strong Arm's mother?" he asked, as he offered the cup to her lips. "Her voice is full of sweet echoes as the mountain caves far away, and floats from her young throat clear and soft as the waters of the Serene River.* The blood of her wounded heart has dimmed its current, but the balsam will stop the flow, that the Mocking-Bird may sing the dirge of her young."

She looked up at the strange faces before her.

"My child," she murmured; "my dead, drowned boy! Oh! can you not take him from that black, deep river?"

The Indian went to a corner of the hut, and lifting a fresh-woven coffin made of cane, silently brought it to the side of the mat. There he lay, his white limbs seeming whiter by contrast with the scarlet blanket beneath them, and his golden hair lying in soft, light waves about his neck and shoulders. In the folded clasp of one tiny hand was a bow made of acacia-wood, and in the other, a quiver of feathered arrows. At his feet were placed a mug of rice, and a bowl of Indian corn.

* The Tennessee river—the word *Tennessee*, in the beautiful Cherokee tongue, signifying serene. This lovely stream is well-named; for, with the exception of that part of it composing the Muscle Shoals, it is smooth as a lake. Its quiet beauty is greatly enhanced by the exquisite clearness and purity of the water.

"Oh! I felt that God could not surely desert me altogether," she said, as she gazed on her child's dead body, rendered so lovely by the kind offices the rude hands of her deliverers had essayed. "Father, I thank Thee that I may lay his young limbs in the earth, where I may one day sleep beside him. Oh, that I might implore Thee to take me now!"

"There is a Teacher in the tribe of my people far away," the Indian woman said, "who has taught them to say, Thy Will Be Done. Has the Mocking-Bird forgotten the faith of her fathers?"

She bent her head over the coffin and sobbed, "Nay; though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

"The young warrior waiteth to begin his journey to the great hunting-grounds," the Strong Arm said. "If he were a Cherokee, we would place him in the bay-tree, and the birds and winds would sing to him until he entered the country where his sinews will never shrink, nor his arrows falter. But the pale-faces plant their dead like corn. There is one of the Mocking-Bird's people not far hence, who, like the Teacher of the Cherokees, worships the Great Spirit out of a book. He shall come to bury the dead." The Indian left the hut, and was soon out of sight.

CHAPTER XXI.

I hear thy whisper, and the warm tears gush
Into mine eye, the quick pulse thrills my heart.

HEMANS.

The Indian woman sat down beside the bereaved mother, but spoke not, for the grief on the calm, white features of the stricken stranger, as she gently smoothed the silken hair of her dead boy, was too solemn and awful to be desecrated by a sound even of comforting. She still lay lost to everything but the presence of that precious coffin, when, after an hour's absence, the Strong Arm re-entered the lodge, followed by the tall, fine figure of a man, and a decrepid, gray-haired woman, who approached the mat where the mother and child lay. Nelly Blackburn raised her eyes to the shrunken, pitying features of the woman, and with a broken sob, buried her head in Widow Donald's bosom.

Bill Donald gave one look at the mother and her dead child, and before Nelly was aware of his presence, left the lodge without speaking. He walked slowly down the wood-path near the river, unwinding, with his strong, perceptive brain, the tangled web the Strong Arm had given him just before, and which the Indian himself had caught from Nelly's delirious ravings through the night. He remembered the first conversation he held with his mother in their Southern home the night of her arrival, one year before. He himself had gone by land in August, leaving her to go on the Reindeer with Tom Carper,

who was going to look at southern localities with the view of settling at some future day. When Widow Donald reached Louisville, the boat was in readiness to go, and she had but a few minutes to remain with Mrs. Arnett; but Nelly was sent for, and stayed with her until her departure. Bill remembered how sadly his mother spoke of the great change which had come over "the blithe child" since she left Lily Dell; and when Tom Carper suggested ill-health as its origin, he remembered how the old woman shook her head, and said, with a tremor, "There is something ailing the child's heart, Tom, depend upon it."

Changed indeed, he mused, as he walked through the thick magnolia forest: so changed, he had never known her for the playmate of his boyhood, except by those large, amber eyes; and not even then, but for the look they cast into his mother's face as soon as she was recognised. He had noticed the same expression once before — when the first clod fell on Mabel's coffin, and she clutched at her mother's gown and gazed imploringly into her face. That look was heart-rending; but it was the look of a *child*, with all a child's hopes, and all a child's incredulous unwillingness to believe in death and the grave; and if it could have found a voice, would have expressed its doubt that life had left the body they were burying. But the steady, wretched glance he had just seen — the hopeless, tearless eyes opening wider and wider as recognition came; and their beggared, desolate expression, told of a *woman's* soul, charred and blackened by the lightnings of a scathing tempest.

He reached the outskirts of a clearing, where four stout negroes were digging the grave he had ordered when the

Strong Arm told his errand. He stood there until it was finished, and one of the men had returned from the house, about a quarter of a mile distant, with a plain wooden box to hold the coffin. Bidding the servants remain until his return, he retraced the foot-path to the Indian cabin, and entering unobserved by Nelly, who lay gazing on her dead child, he whispered to his mother that all was ready. She arose, with the Strong Arm and his mother, and, in a clear but troubled voice, Bill Donald began the Burial Service. Nelly knew his voice instantly; but instead of looking up, her head sank lower and lower on the pillow, and when the service was ended, the tears which had been driven back in a flood when the Strong Arm spoke of her child's burial, were flowing freely.

Bill Donald went to the mat where she lay, and lifting her light, attenuated figure, stroked back the long hair from her face, and kissed her forehead.

"Our Father," he said, in gentle, comforting tones, "*Our Father*, Nelly, mine, and yours, and the child's. We must lay the little body in the earth now, but Willie is sheltered in a safer bosom even than yours."

The Strong Arm approached and lifted the coffin; but Bill, giving Nelly into the arms of his mother, took it from the Indian and held it a moment before her.

"We must go," he murmured.

She looked at him wildly, and then turning away, moaned in piteous, heart-searching tones. Bill Donald walked slowly from the lodge, while the tears gushed from his eyes; and, aided by the Strong Arm, who silently laid his hand on one end of the coffin, as if to establish his right to bear it also, carried the dead child through the dense wilderness to the lonely grave.

It was past noon when they returned to the lodge. The light wagon which had brought Bill and his mother in the morning to the cabin, still waited at the door. The old Indian woman spread a buffalo-skin and a blanket on the hinder seat, and Bill Donald, lifting Nelly in his arms as if she had been a child, bore her to the vehicle, which his mother had already entered. Then taking his seat beside her, he supported her with a woman's gentleness; and while the Strong Arm and his mother watched them from the door of a lodge, they went slowly along a wagon-road that led to their dwelling, a mile distant.

The place Bill Donald had purchased was about fifteen miles above the town of Baton Rouge. The farm contained a thousand acres, only eighty of which had been cleared, however. The house, an old but comfortable log-cabin, with three rooms, and a rude gallery in front, stood near the lower end of the clearing, and in full view of the Mississippi. There was a large orchard of fig-trees in the rear, and on the southern side a thrifty, well-appointed garden. The yard, orchard, and garden were in one enclosure, fenced with stout, rough picketing. Several magnolias and beech-trees guarded the house in front, but flowers there were none, except a single bush of crimson-roses by the porch, and one lonely blossom on a cape-jasmine opposite. There were tall crape-myrtles on the walk from the front gate to the porch, but their bare white stems shone cold in the slanting sun-rays, and their few remaining leaves were reddened by the nipping November blasts.

Bill had bought the plantation from a Creole two years before, together with twelve negroes, to be paid for within five years. The two first payments had already been

made by the sale of the old home in Kentucky, and a sum he had saved from his hard earnings. He had made no improvements, except to refit the cabins of the negroes, which were built on the farther border of the clearing, back of the orchard. The dwelling-house was habitable, though homely; and he resolutely resisted all the suggestions of his refined tastes as to beautifying either house or grounds, until every dollar of the purchase-money should be paid.

There were fires blazing in all the rooms when they reached the house; for though Bill and his mother little dreamed who was the sufferer in the Indian wigwam, the Strong Arm had told them she was the daughter of the Pale Face, whose wild talk during the night told of a grief that made them shudder; and determining to bring her to their own home, Widow Donald had left directions with Dinah and her daughters, the faithful slaves she had reared, to have everything cheerful and comfortable before their return.

Bill carried Nelly in his arms and laid her on his mother's bed, and Dinah drew near to arrange the pillows.

"La sakes! Ef it a'n't my poor Miss Nelly, Mistis!" she exclaimed, as the dark eyes of the sufferer opened, and she extended her thin, slender hand. "But whar is yer ——"

"Be quiet, Dinah," Widow Donald said, half-sternly, and the woman with a mortified look left the room.

It was many weeks before Nelly was able to leave her bed. One of the female servants slept on a pallet in the same room with her and Widow Donald, and day and night her slightest want was anticipated by the whole

household. Her physician was the old Indian woman, and no day passed without a visit to her from the Strong Arm, or some simple offering — a swan's wing, a haunch of venison, a wild turkey, or a tuft of brilliant ibis feathers; and before she was strong enough to bear her own weight, she had learned to love him with as sincere affection as she felt for the widow's true-hearted son.

She had seen nothing of Bill Donald since she left Lily Dell; and had heard but little, except through Amy's mischievous, rollicking letters. She was therefore more than surprised at the fine mental cultivation and strong good sense hid beneath his unpretending, plain exterior life. She scarcely saw him through the day, but every night he sat beside her, reading from some choice old classic, or telling her, with a brother's gentle freedom, all his thoughts and plans—all his views of life and its aims and hopes; and though no allusion was made to her own broken heart, until she had strength to tell him and his mother all its sorrow, his every look and tone and word told her, with a beautiful eloquence, how fully he had read all she could ever say.

One day in the beginning of April, Nelly went with Bill and his mother to the grave of her child. It was under a wide-spreading live-oak, and enclosed by a square picket-work of young mulberry-posts, curiously inwrought with grape-vines. At each corner a Cherokee rose had been planted, and its branches, interlaced among the openings of the fence, were white with fragrant blossoms. It was the work of the Strong Arm, and had been performed the day after the burial.

That evening, as Nelly sat in the wide entry between the rooms of the dwelling, weaving a bright fishing-net

of many colors, the Indian entered, and laying a large spray of yellow jasmine blossoms at her feet, said in a clear accent,

"The moon of strawberries has come, and the Strong Arm and his mother must return to their people. The medicine-woman has gathered her store of herbs, and the voice of the Strong Arm is needed at the council-fire."

Nelly folded the net she had just finished, and her tears were falling thick upon it when she arose and placed it in his hand.

"'Tis a gift to the Strong Arm from his white sister," she said. "Will he bear it with him as a token of her affection, and with it will he take her holiest blessing?"

He folded it under his mantle, and stood gazing upon her silently for some time.

"Will the Mocking-Bird grant the Strong Arm one favor?" he said at length, "'tis the last he will ever ask her."

"Any thing," she replied earnestly, while she laid her hand on his arm.

"Will she sing to him one of the hymns of her people? He has listened to her teachings, and she has won him to believe the creed of her fathers. Her voice is very sweet in prayer, but the Strong Arm longs to hear, before he leaves her forever, the clear notes that lulled the young warrior to his last sleep."

He had asked more than he imagined, for Nelly had never sung since that terrible night when the sound of her voice, as she sung to her dying child, drew the wondering Indian to the shore. But she went with him to the wide log step at the gallery entrance; and the full tones of her voice filled the still air as she sung:

"Guide me, oh Thou great Jehovah,
Pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but Thou art mighty,—
Hold me with Thy powerful hand.

Open now the crystal fountains
Whence the living waters flow;
Let the fiery, cloudy pillar
Lead me all my journey through.

Feed me with the heavenly manna
In this barren wilderness;
Be my sword, and shield, and banner!
Be the Lord my righteousness!

When I tread the verge of Jordan,
Bid my anxious fears subside;
Death of death, and hell's destruction,
Land me safe on Canaan's side."

He sat for some time silent after the hymn was ended. Then handing her a pair of small beaded moccasins, he said,

"The Strong Arm goes to his tribe far away; but he will never forget the God of the Pale Face, nor the angel who revealed Him."

He strode rapidly away before she could reply, and passed like a swift meteor into the darkening shadows. She went out under the magnolia trees and looked after him, but he was out of sight; and as she re-entered the house with a heavy step, she felt that one of the noblest presences in the wild, new home she had found had been taken away; and that henceforth bird, and tree, and blossom would be seen only through the shadow of a loss not soon to be forgotten.

But the engaging strangeness of Nature's new revelations around her occupied many a thought that would otherwise have been given up to the crushing memories

of the past; and thus a cheerful serenity took the place of the deep dejection which had eaten away her strength and peace. Busied with Widow Donald in household cares, or listening to Bill's many projects for the future, she learned to feel content; and an occasional gleam of the joyous life of the blithe child shone out of the cloud of her dejection. But "when sorrows come, they come not single-handed;" and the fast-failing health of Widow Donald, toward the close of the summer, foretold that she would be with them but a little while longer. The tree that has grown old will not bear transplanting, even into a more genial soil; but she had always been so hale and strong, neither Nelly nor her son was prepared for the warning thus given. As is frequent with such constitutions, she grew old as it were in a single night. Her settled conviction, too, that Death was close at hand, hastened his approach; and when the melancholy November leaves fluttered to the ground again, they strewed another grave beside that of the golden-haired child.

CHAPTER XXII.

All are not taken,—there are left behind,
 Living beloveds, tender looks to bring
 And make the daylight still a happy thing.

E. B. BROWNING.

THE winter wind howled through the streets of Louisville, and drove the sharp snow-flakes madly against the windows of Mrs. Arnett's cottage. There was no light in the room Nelly Blackburn had occupied with Rachel Hunt, scarcely more than a year before; no fire blazing on the hearth, no busy occupant beside the little table. But every article of furniture showed the same orderly care her tidy hands had always bestowed; and her simple wardrobe still hung from the pegs in one corner of the room. Perhaps she had gone to spend the night with some friend? No. Rachel Hunt had no friend since Nelly went away, and had never, since she left Oliver Berry's roof, slept out of her own room until —

The fitful gusts banged the shutters to the front window of Mrs. Arnett's room, and the old woman started with a shudder, as if it had been some mocking devil outside. It was very late. The watchman had cried the hour of one, but she still sat by the dying fire, looking intently at the strange figures it made, as coat after coat of gray ashes gathered and fell from the mouldering brands, and the red seams opened and thrust forth faint blue flames, like the tongues of serpents, or blackened slowly, like irreverent, mocking lips. Sleep

had not been near her pillow for three days and nights; yet no one would have dreamed it, for her eyes were brighter and more piercing than they had been for years, and there was a vigor and firmness in her tread as she arose and paced the floor during the rest of that stormy night, it had scarcely known even in her freshest youth.

But where was Rachel Hunt?

The morning light was coming, faint and flickering, through the grated window of the ground-floor dungeon of the city jail, when the ponderous key grated in the iron lock, and the jailer entered with a bundle of papers and a heavy basket.

"I've brought your day's ration, child," he said to a figure crouching and shivering by the half-kindled fire, "and I've got something to cheer you up, being as you like to read."

He spoke in a gruff but kindly tone; and Rachel Hunt lifted her small person from the stone hearth, and stood to receive his offering. He set the basket on a rude table that stood near a ruder bed in one corner of the cell, and stooping down, blew from the stout bellows of his capacious chest a blast which kindled a bright fire, whose leaping flames scattered almost a cheery glow throughout the prison.

"You are very kind, Robin," she said, in a low, but steady voice. "How is Mother Arnett this morning?"

"She had a bad night, Tempy said; but the woman was in such a hurry, I did not get a chance to say much to her; for she just dropped the basket of victuals at the door, and went right back."

Rachel sat down on a stool beside the table, and bowed her head upon it.

"My poor old afflicted mother!" she murmured, "God help and comfort her."

"God help and comfort the likes o' you, poor lonesome thing," Robin Marks replied, as he brushed the tears from his face with his coarse coat-sleeve. "A young thing that never troubled nobody, that never said harm of nobody, that never went to see nobody but them as could not help themselves, and always loved to wait on the poor folks, that could not give you nothing but honest thanks,—you a born lady, too, without a morsel of pride like the nasty top-scum of society that's trying to spatter you with its filthy mess,—I tell you, Miss Rachel, I can't begin to believe all that Bible you love so dearly; becase *you* never denied nothing nor nobody in your life, and there a'n't no angel come yet to open the prison doors for you, as the Scriptor says was done for Peter. I'll give up this business, and go to mauling rails, if I can't get nothing else to do. But I don't mean to keep no post any more that makes me go right agin human feeling like this."

"Listen to me, Robin," Rachel said with earnestness.

"An angel has already visited this prison; an angel came hither with the proscribed, outcast orphan,—the angel of an upright, truthful spirit. I have sung with it as lofty an anthem as went up from the souls of the chained, anointed Witnesses in the stocks at Philippi; and this dungeon, this cold stone floor, that high, frowning, contracted grating that keeps out God's blessed sunshine even, all tell me of but one thing; not the wrongs I suffer, but the terrible sin of my accusers, and the misery they have caused the one who has been truest and most loving to me. For myself, I care not. I have had

little, very little to do with the world, and neither its blessing nor its curse has power to affect my peace. The very few of any kind with whom I have associated, will not turn from me in my dark hour, nor listen to the gibes and lies of the malicious. And though those few are the undowried poor, whose influence weighs nothing against the power of the rich and 'stationed,' their friendship is worth more to me than all the verdicts of the courts. It may be that the decision of my judges will swing me on the gallows, to be the target for the gaping wonder of an unruly mob; but I do not believe it, Robin. I am so sure of the triumph of Truth, I do not fear to stand my trial, without counsel or aid from any one, though every circumstance is against me. And even if I should be condemned and hung, I will go from a cruel world to the bosom of my parents in heaven. God is always kind, though His ways are past finding out."

"But won't you employ no counsel at all, Miss Rachel? I would get Mr. Clay, if I was you. He can clear you, I know."

"Mr. Clay never saw nor heard of me, until now," she replied. "I have no influential friends to enlist him in my favor, and no money to pay him for his services; and though I know the nobleness of his character, I cannot throw myself upon his benevolence, but will trust rather to my own knowledge of my own case, and my simple statement of facts before the court, for my acquittal. Yet I look for no miraculous aid from heaven, Robin; for I have learned to read God's word as I believe He intended it, and to see in its wonderful narratives, features applicable to ourselves in these days of broader light it is true, but not in the sense which many

use as a weapon against their truth. Our Lord does not now work miracles for our good; but the influences of the Comforter He sent to abide with His children forever, are more consoling and efficacious than sight to the blind, or healing to the leper."

Robin Marks looked at her earnestly. "I told Margery," he said, "when the baby died, and you closed its eyes and dressed it in that pretty white shroud, that you was an angel of God; and now I know it. But them Blackburns is born devils, and I a'n't afeard to say it nowhere. I ha'n't forgot how they treated that young daughter-in-law of theirs; Sukey Badger told me all about it, and how her husband kept my poor sister out of Sukey's wages, too; and how Sylvester Blackburn's wife used to stop Sukey on the street to pry into Miss Nelly's affairs, and then go off and make lies about her; and"—

"Never mind, Robin," Rachel said firmly. "'He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it;' and they cannot always malign the innocent with impunity. The cherishing of ill-feeling toward our persecutors only brings us to a level with themselves; and you do not desire such a position, I am sure."

He paused a moment, without replying. Then taking up his hat from the hearth, he said,

"I know the Bible is true; every word of it, or else you could not be what you are, Miss Rachel."

When he was gone, Rachel Hunt opened the papers Mrs. Arnett had sent with her basket of food. Among them was a morning issue of the Kentucky Gazette. She glanced over its contents with a listless, vacant gaze, until her eyes were at last arrested by the heading of a

prominent editorial, and her fingers trembled as she read the following paragraph:

Some time during the past summer, and shortly after the removal of Sylvester Blackburn, Esq., to his residence on the Lexington road, the skeleton of a man was found half-buried under an old hut used many years ago by wood-cutters. A cloth vest, discovered near the bones, was recognized by Mrs. Blackburn as one worn by the Rev. Edgar Cameron, whose sudden return and immediate disappearance created so much interest in our town six years ago. To put all doubt aside, however, a gold pencil-case, with his name engraven on it, was found in one pocket of the vest. We published an account of this in the summer, as our readers will remember. Recent developments on the part of Mrs. Blackburn, made in the privacy of home, and with no disposition that they should be told the public, but which her friends and the friends of the dead urged her to divulge, tended to fix the murder upon Thomas Carper, of Fayette, and Rachel Hunt, an orphan girl, little known to our community, but who has been living with Mrs. Arnett for many years past. These parties were, therefore, arraigned before the city authorities three days ago, and the evidence brought was so strong as to commit them to the county jail for trial at the March term.

"It is known that Mr. Cameron had a considerable amount of money about his person; that he took the Wilderness road about two o'clock of the afternoon of September 10th, 1813; that Rachel Hunt followed him, and that about midnight that night she returned to Louisville in company with Thomas Carper, whose fortune

acquired soon after, was taken as additional evidence against him. During the trial, Carper was greatly excited; and the night after, committed suicide in his cell. The other prisoner remains in custody, but refuses to converse with any one on the subject, or to employ legal counsel, having determined to defend her own cause."

Rachel read every sentence again and again; and though she had thought of her condition, her cheek blanched as the prospect of being brought before the unscrupulous gaze of the world was drawn upon her mind. She laid the paper on the table beside the basket of delicate food her old foster-mother had sent, and crouching in the middle of the bed, for the stone floor was chill and damp, she watched the grated window till the light of the setting sun came in for a moment, and, broken by the iron bars, rested in shining bands of gold upon the dingy ceiling. Three days only had passed since she had been dragged from her quiet home—three days only of the six weeks that must elapse before the decision of her fate; and yet no year of her life had ever seemed half so long. Without books or work of any kind, without any companionship—though for that she cared but little—her mind had been wrestling with all the black memories that had darkened her life, and she knew, unless some change took place, she would be summoned to another tribunal than the one before whose bar she must shortly appear. She went to the fire-place and re-kindled the fire. Then lifting the napkins from the basket on the table, she ate a scanty portion of food, and, seating herself on the rickety wooden stool, watched the door until the night deepened. It was at last opened

by Robin Marks again, who visited her regularly twice a day. This time he was followed by another person, and Mrs. Arnett entered and folded her child in her arms.

"I would have come before," she said, "but I have been too crazy to talk to anybody, Rachel. I've been begging to stay here with you, but Mr. Starkey, the Commonwealth's attorney, says it is contrary to law."

"It must not be thought of for a moment, Mother Arnett," Rachel replied, in a singularly cheerful tone. "I have arranged a plan by which I can make the time pass very pleasantly; and if you will promise to be happy, and come to see me whenever you can, I will have nothing left to grieve me."

"What is your plan, dear?" the old woman asked, while Robin Marks looked at the young prisoner in silent wonder.

"I cannot teach school now, you know," Rachel said, "so I have all my time at my own disposal. I want you to get sewing for me to do, which will keep me busy through the day; and if you will let Tempy bring my shelves of books to me, Robin will swing them in the corner, I know. Then I can read every night, and be so content and peaceful." She smiled as she concluded, and tears, the first she had shed since the day of her arrest, gushed from her patient eyes.

Mrs. Arnett scanned the room in every part. "I can't stay here," she said, "my heart will break if I do. Go to bed, Rachel; you will get your death on this wet, cold floor. Don't get up, neither, until I come in the morning with a carpet and some few necessities. My poor, wretched child!" she continued, as she bent over the sobbing girl, who had gone to the bed, and was lying on

the coarse blankets, convulsed with emotion. "I wish I could know why God allows all this!"

"Mother!"

The small, crushed figure arose from the rude couch, and the black, sad eyes gazed sorrowfully into Mrs. Arnett's face.

"Mother," she said, earnestly, "shall we, blind pigmies of an hour, dare question the Omnipotent, or marvel that He does not interpose a miracle in our behalf? Should we not rather wonder that beings made in His glorious image can so far forget their estate as to covenant with the powers of the Evil One for the overthrow of the innocent and lowly? 'Like as a father pitieth his children, so God pitieth them that fear him;' and the peace of mind I enjoy—not as a direct gift from heaven, but as the unfailing result of His holy moral law—I would not exchange for all the hopes of the brightest life. So, even in my present condition, God has favored me far above my enemies, by granting me a blessing the world cannot take away."

CHAPTER XXIII.

Swift she flung

The mantle from her face, and gazed around
With a faint shriek at that familiar sound.

HEMANS.

WEEK after week passed on. Rachel Hunt, in her half-lighted prison, made comfortable and cheery by the kind care of her mother, exacted, day and night, of all her energies their utmost capacity, thus keeping her mind so active there was no opportunity left her for brooding. One matter, however, gave her much annoyance—the constant visiting of her minister. He was a man of fine address and eloquence, and if he had been possessed of the piety of the excellent man who preceded him, would have been a most welcome guest to the lonely prisoner. But his sole object, since he had entered upon his charge, had been to swell the numbers of the church, without regard to their morality; and to use every means his politic mind could devise, to bring the rich and influential into the fold. The poor and suffering of his congregation seldom saw him, except in the pulpit; and during the whole three years he had been in Louisville, he had entered Mrs. Arnett's house but once; and went then, he said, to see if he could not induce her and Rachel Hunt to make some acknowledgments to Mrs. Blackburn, who had told him, when he asked her why she never received the communion, that she could not go to the Lord's table with persons who had wronged her so

deeply as she asserted they had. Since Rachel's imprisonment, however, he had gone frequently to see her, and with a long face and excessively solemn voice, had talked to her about the terrible sin of murder, and the doom of all liars, never accusing her openly, but using those insulting inuendoes the upright and fearless scorn to employ, until she began to chafe under it, and was more than once tempted to ask him to declare himself fully. She did not regard his covert allusions to herself, however, so much as the insinuations he constantly threw out concerning the criminality of Tom Carper, the friend of her earliest youth, the devoted counsellor and protector of riper years; and to her mind there was an enormity in his pertinacious dwelling upon the guilt of one who had been driven by insanity into the presence of the Only Just, which sickened her spirit, and impelled her to say severe and bitter things.

A few days before the time appointed for the trial, Dora Blackburn sat in one of the fine rooms of her new home in the country, busily examining an Indian girdle, a cloth vest, and a battered pencil-case.

"I will never be detected," she thought, and she chuckled afresh at the good-fortune which had taken Edgar Cameron away from Oliver Berry's drawing-room six years before, so hurriedly that he forgot the bundle and pencil-case she had treasured so carefully, waiting only for an opportunity to turn them to account. And the time had come at last. Her own wicked hands had discolored the vest which the bundle contained with strong acids and filthy water—her own wicked hands had battered the beautiful pencil-case, and her own fiendish heart had dictated the design that induced her to place

them beside the skeleton she had discovered in the rubbish by the old shed. "I will never be detected; and we'll see yet how Rachel Hunt will fare for daring to thrust that falsehood back on me."

But for all her apparent recklessness, there was a shiver at her heart's core that made her quake, as if she stood on the brink of a seething volcano; and the sound of Dr. Haile's heavy step on the porch made her leap, as if the explosion had already burst. She had recovered all her composure and sanctimoniousness, however, when she entered the room where he sat, though she had resolved to make an effort to shake off the impending danger. She talked to him for some time in low, hasty tones; until at length he expressed his determination to go to see Rachel Hunt at once, and leaving her alone, but greatly relieved, he rode away toward the city.

It was past noon when he entered the prison. Rachel was serene and cheerful, and her clear eyes shone so truthfully when she greeted him, he seemed abashed, as if he had come on some disgraceful errand. After a short, skirmishing conversation, he commenced, with an effort at extreme gravity:

"I have come this morning, Rachel, to talk with you for the last time upon the subject of the prospect before you."

"Let me beg leave, then, to ask you to declare yourself unreservedly, Dr. Haile," she replied, with quiet dignity. "Your insinuations, you will allow me to say, have been duly appreciated; and I must confess my preference for straight-forward candor."

"I have hesitated to speak plainly," he said, apologetically, "because, in the first place, my position before

the public makes it prudent for me not to commit myself, as your good sense will doubtless perceive; for it is my Christian duty to become all things to all men, that by such means I may gain the more to the Lord; and secondly, I have been in doubt of your innocence, or rather, I should say, of the proofs of your innocence, and therefore — and I —”

“Go on, if you please,” Rachel said, as she laid down her work, and sent a glance keen as a newly-whetted scalpel into his embarrassed countenance.

“And therefore I have felt in doubt as to what course I should pursue, or rather in fear that the church might become involved in this matter without your being benefited in any wise by my aid; for you know, Mr. Blackburn’s family belong to the congregation, and as you do also, I did not wish the church to be scandalized. But from all I have seen of you, I am inclined to think Mrs. Blackburn is mistaken in considering you guilty. Still, you have acted unwisely in refusing to be friendly with her in past years; for, if you had received her advances, she would no doubt be your friend now. I have come this morning to talk to you about this very matter. I have had several conversations with her recently, and she seems deeply distressed at the course things have taken, and says she would do anything almost to avoid appearing in court against you. Now the Blackburns have more influence in the community, of course, than you have; and if you can satisfy Mrs. Blackburn in any way, I am sure, though the trial cannot now be arrested, the testimony may be so modified as to render an acquittal possible, and a reprieve sure. Indeed, she told me, if you would acknowledge that you told her of the death

of Mabel Bracken, which she says was the cause of Cameron’s sudden departure — for she has made a full disclosure of all the conversation that passed between herself and Edgar Cameron, not only to me, but to many of the church members, from a sense of duty — she will pass by your having followed him from town, when she gives in her testimony; and by dwelling more particularly upon the guilt of Carper, which the other witnesses will attest, she may enable you to escape the severest rigors of the law. I would urge this upon you; for the testimony of the persons who heard you ask after Cameron at the Big Ball Tavern will weigh heavily against you. Mrs. Blackburn says, furthermore, she has once or twice, to her most particular friends, spoken of little derelictions of which you were guilty while you lived with Mr. Berry; and that you denied them when, by some means or other, they reached your ear. These you must acknowledge also, and promise hereafter never to speak disrespectfully of herself.”

“Do I understand *you* as advising me to this course, Dr. Haile?” she asked, with such an accent as if each word had been cut out of granite, and stood a chiselled image before him.

“Well, not precisely,” he replied, with some perplexity. “I do not believe you have ever been untruthful, but I would advise you to empower me to say to Mrs. Blackburn, that henceforth you will never speak disrespectfully of her, and I can, by a little contrivance, make this cover the whole ground.”

Rachel Hunt arose to her feet.

“I have never mentioned Dora Blackburn’s name,” she said, “to any one in the community, except when her

falsehoods have been brought to my ear. I say *falsehoods*, because, besides the miserable untruth she told Edgar Cameron, she has more than once impeached my honesty. Whenever I have heard of these things, I have simply and unmistakably said *they were lies*, and I repeat the same assertion here to you. I know very well why she is so desirous to settle with me before the day of my trial. You think that she is popular, and that I am in the minority; but she knows better; and she knows, moreover, that the crucible of Truth will try the base alloy she has coined, and that her downfall, rather than mine, is threatened. I say here, to you, she has traduced me most maliciously, and she knows it. My only message to her is, that I pray God to forgive her sins. You can take that to her, as soon as you like."

"No, I will not tell her that," he said, "because I yet hope I may induce you to consent that you will hereafter speak only respectfully of her."

"The Bible I read, Dr. Haile, teaches me to give honor to whom honor is due. I have no respect for Mrs. Blackburn, and promise to do only as I have done, whether I live five days or fifty years. She is a slanderer, and I will say it with my latest breath; while, at the same time, I bear her no ill-feeling, and would be glad to speak in her praise, if Truth would allow."

"But you do not surely know how much you are jeopardizing," he still persuaded. "Think of it a little longer. You will not have to compromise Truth by complying with my request, and——"

"Excuse me, Dr. Haile, but to my mind the promise to speak only respectfully of Mrs. Blackburn hereafter, is a plain admission that I have done otherwise hitherto;

which I cannot allow, inasmuch as I have only told the truth in self-defence, and must do the same again, if there be necessity."

"But you will no doubt save your life," he said, "if you will do as I request."

"Save my life — and to what end?" she replied, with indignation. "That I may be forever disgraced in my own esteem, for having pandered to the cowardly hypocrisy of the wicked, and consented indirectly to their mischievous lies. No. Let me rather die with an unstained conscience, than forget for a moment my allegiance to the heavenly spirit of Truth, of which you seem to have so poor a conception. You are my minister, Dr. Haile; I pray you, therefore, leave me, lest I forget the holy office which you represent, in my wonder at the strange conduct of the incumbent."

Rachel's work lay unnoticed long after Dr. Haile had gone. She had seen, from the first day of her imprisonment, the whole machinery of Dora Blackburn's plot, and knew its origin as well as the revengeful, baffled woman herself. Tom Carper had told her, not six months before, that he had not received one cent for the property he sold Sylvester Blackburn, who was again tottering on the verge of a greater chasm than had engulfed him before. He was growing old—Dora Blackburn knew he could never rise again, if he sunk then; and the recollection of all she had lost in not securing Edgar Cameron, aroused all her venom towards the innocent young orphan whom she had made her instrument before; and this, together with the fiendish hope that by condemning Tom Carper his claim to the home they had purchased would be set aside did not fester long in her brain until it

ripened into the loathsome carbuncle of malignant purpose which she had so cunningly perfected.

At first, popular horror at the murder of so good a man as Edgar Cameron called down the severest judgment against the supposed murderers; and when Tom Carper was found self-poisoned in his cell, the outcry was raised even higher against the remaining prisoner. But so unusual and atrocious a crime made the character of its alleged perpetrator the subject of the most prying scrutiny, and Rachel Hunt's stood the test. She was scarcely known in "high society," but the predominant poor were as familiar with her goodness as with the cheerful sunshine; and their unbridled indignation rose to such a pitch that the city police had to be doubled in every street, and an especial military guard appointed for the jail, to prevent an outbreak. Dora Blackburn became aware of this; and fear of the consequences her villany would bring down upon herself, distracted her cowardly heart to such an extent, she was driven at last to devise some means of escape; and, still resolved never to reveal her real object, strove to gloss over a most glaring intent for self-safety by a show of magnanimity. Rachel Hunt saw beneath the mask at once, and from the second week of her imprisonment, felt no fear of conviction. She had been made aware of the strong hold she had upon the hearts of the lowly multitude. No day passed without a visit to her dungeon from one of the humble, honest-hearted people whose blessings for her went up to heaven with their daily prayers; and the children she had taught at home and in the sabbath-school, came with their loving, troubled eyes, and filled her gloomy prison with a presence more than half-divine. Strengthened by these

manifestations, a cheerfulness almost joyous took the place of the insane feeling that seethed her brain like red-hot iron when she was first accused; and though, if she had been utterly friendless, she would have spurned the overtures Dora Blackburn tendered her through Dr. Haile, there was a hopeful serenity in her heart when she answered him, giving positive proof, that if she had ever shuddered for the future, she was calm and unblenching then.

But there was more before her than she thought. Dr. Haile, pierced to the quick by the probing look she gave him when she invited him to leave her, determined to make no further efforts to change her purpose; and though, like all politic people, he *wisely* refrained from declaring himself until it should be revealed which party was triumphant, he could not renounce the fine dinners and carriage-drives furnished him so freely by the Blackburns; and his continued intimacy with them, after the known discontinuance of his visits to Rachel Hunt, was seized upon by her enemies and made an efficient weapon against her, in the minds of their associates, who were clamorous for justice to be done, without troubling themselves to investigate the merits of the suit, and caring really but little, so the excitement was kept up. It was an easy matter, then, for Dora Blackburn to bring up the last visit of Dr. Haile to Rachel's prison as a witness against her; and knowing how entirely non-committal the wily clergyman would remain, she did not scruple to affirm that Rachel's manner toward him was rude and insolent to such a degree, he had determined not to see her again.

The day of trial came. It was a fresh, sunshiny,

spring-like morning, one of those jewel-days wherewith the roystering March is wont to deck himself; and Rachel Hunt's heart leaped with a child's joy as the wife of the jailer entered with a nosegay of wild blossoms sent by one of her little friends. They told her that the crocus and the wake-robin were springing in the woods again—that the mellowed winds were chanting their grand Cantate Domino through the stately cedars, in concert with the silvery alto of the freed, rejoicing streams; and tears, the first she had shed in many days, rained over her white face as she placed them in a little vase on her rickety table. She stood absorbed in thought, a beautiful but heart-rending picture, her white night-dress hanging from one shoulder, and the other, bare of vesture, shining fairer by contrast with the masses of jetty hair that had escaped from her loosened cap, and hung below her waist.

"Lili Schultz told me to say her father and mother will be here at nine o'clock with their barouche," Hannah Marks ventured at last to say. "It is nearly in sight now, and you know court opens at a quarter past nine. Shall I get your dress and things for you?"

"No, thank you, I can soon prepare them myself," was the slowly-uttered reply, so calm and low a shudder crept over the simple-hearted woman, as if a sudden chill had seized her. She passed precipitately from the cell, and hurriedly locked the door.

As the town-clock's brazen voice rung nine, the ponderous portal swung open again, and the guard entered to conduct the prisoner to the court. The murderer's heavy chain was fastened on her delicate wrists, and she was led out to the carriage where Mrs. Arnett and Gott-

lieb Schultz and his wife were waiting to accompany her. A double file of soldiers was stationed from the jail to the carriage-door, to keep back the press of the crowd thronging the streets. A hoarse murmur surged through the multitude as she was conducted to the vehicle, but the armed men that marched before, behind, and on each side of the barouche, as it drove slowly towards the court-room, told them how worse than futile would be any attempt to set aside the law; and with dark faces and ferocious hearts they tramped onward, the fall of their heavy feet on the pavements sounding like the roar of a gathering tempest.

The court-room was crowded as Rachel Hunt, led by the guards, and followed by Mrs. Arnett and her German friends, her only witnesses, walked slowly up the main aisle toward the bar. She was habited in deep mourning, which she had never laid aside since the death of her mother; and the serene, heavenly beauty of her face filled the assemblage with such awe and interest, not a sound was heard as she approached the seat assigned her, except the rattling of her chains. The counsel for the Commonwealth stood to the left of the bar, in front of a group of witnesses for the State, who occupied a seat outside the balustrade. Dora Blackburn sat near them, beside her husband. The seats behind her were crowded with ladies, so that there was nothing like isolation of place to embarrass her; but she was closely veiled, and a quick, nervous look cast every now and then toward the open windows, which were choked with frowning, impatient faces, told plainly enough, if any one could have understood it, that, though the diabolical purpose which had implicated that unoffending girl still

rankled in her bosom, the fear of retribution made her tremble in every limb, as if she expected each moment to receive a death-shot from some angry, unknown hand. She had seen the throngs moving toward the jail as she entered the town with her husband; and as she passed across the court-yard, the hiss of the crowd outside gave indignant warning of the danger that threatened her.

The profound silence following the entrance of Rachel Hunt, was broken by the voice of the Judge calling for the order of prosecution, and the examination of witnesses began. One after another arose, on the part of the State, and Rachel herself grew paler as the evidence brought against her was declared; for bribery had done its devoir faithfully, and the proofs of her guilt were made strong enough almost to satisfy the Arch-Fiend himself. It was sworn, by persons who saw her at the Big Ball Tavern, that she had enquired into all the particulars of Edgar Cameron's departure; that she had gone after him with every indication of a malignant object; and her mysterious return with Tom Carper, and her pretended insanity afterward, were made to appear as if the plot had been premeditated, on her part at least, knowing as she did that Tom Carper was expected in Louisville, and would reach the cross-roads about the same time with Cameron and his companion; and a shorter way through the woods was spoken of as the one she travelled, so as to reach the cross-roads and confer with Carper before the arrival of their victim.

Next followed the testimony of Dora Blackburn. In a voice hesitant with a well-feigned agitation, she spoke of her acquaintance with Rachel Hunt in the house of her brother-in-law; adding falsehood after falsehood to

the tissue without fear, for Oliver Berry was dead, and his family far removed. She could not say how deeply pained she felt, that her duty to God and her country made it necessary for her to tell all she knew in the case; and with her usual sanctity of manner, she proceeded to relate her intimate knowledge of Rachel Hunt's designs upon the purse of Edgar Cameron, asserting that she had abundant reason to believe she wished to marry him, from the ill-humor she manifested whenever any allusion was made to his engagement with Mabel Bracken; and that the strongest and saddest evidence of all, was the fact that as soon as she became aware of his return, she had hurried to her room, and told her of Mabel's death, knowing it would be her painful duty to communicate it to him; so that by thus forestalling his intention to pursue his journey to Fayette, she would have an opportunity to make further efforts to secure him to herself. She dwelt upon the surprised and foiled look of the accused when at the dinner-table the day of his departure she herself had announced his sudden determination to return to the Osage Indians; and her stealthy departure from the house immediately afterward, made the appearances of her guilt still more appalling. She alluded to the prisoner's lack of moral principle, also, and with an effort as if she were painfully unwilling to proceed, she told of instances of theft and lying, which revealed a character at once so corrupt and hypocritical, that eyes which were swimming in sympathetic tears as Rachel Hunt entered the court-room, were fiery with contemptuous indignation now.

When she had concluded her testimony, her husband was called forward. He produced the pencil-case and

vest which his wife had sworn she found, and recognized as Cameron's; and besides, a quaintly beaded leathern girdle. In a slow, pompous tone he minutely detailed the circumstances which led to their discovery by his wife, and her consternation when she discovered Cameron's name on the pencil-case. She had witnessed that she was superintending the planting of some trees in front of their dwelling, and the old log hut being in the way, she had ordered its removal, not dreaming it would reveal the bloody story it had kept so many years. This her husband expatiated upon, and then held up the girdle to the gaze of the crowd. It was much damaged, as if it had lain in muddy water; but the threads on which the beads were strung seemed strong and fresh, and the leather was smooth and flexible. It was identified by the witnesses from the Big Ball Tavern, as having been seen in the possession of Cameron. He spoke also of the suddenly acquired fortune of Tom Carper,—of his intimacy with Rachel Hunt, which had already been attested, and concluded by saying his wife would not have consented to appear against the prisoner, if she had not been convinced it was her imperative duty.

There was no cross-examination. Rachel Hunt had no counsel, refusing from the first to employ any one, and relying on her own truth to defend herself. But it was a greater work than she had contemplated; and as she looked over the vast assemblage, she strove in vain to rise from her seat. There was a sickening silence throughout the house, broken only by the hoarse breathing of the men at the windows; and all eyes were directed toward her as she sat still and death-like, with a strange look as if she felt herself no part of the scene.

"Testimony for the defence!" said the Judge, and the crowd pressed eagerly forward, filling all the aisles and thronging to the very bar. Rachel Hunt arose from her seat, and gathering her scarf closer about her, as if to shield herself from their prying eyes, stood for a moment calm and undismayed, but powerless to speak.

"Testimony for the defence!"

The words were repeated in a louder tone by the impatient dignitary.

"Where is the testimony for the prisoner?"

"Here!" said a deep, clear voice at the door, and the tall figure of Edgar Cameron strode rapidly down the crowded aisle, and stood before the Judges. Rachel Hunt darted toward him without uttering a sound; but her tottering limbs gave way, and before he could spring forward to uphold her, she sunk powerless to the floor. He bent over her prostrate body, and while the shout of the congregated people went up like a hallelujah, he lifted her in his arms, and stood facing her accusers, his fine features radiant with triumphant, holy exultation.

Two days later, Robin Marks and Gottlieb Schultz, with their wives, were witnesses of a plain, unostentatious wedding in the humble parlor of Mrs. Arnett; for the *chances*,—as worldlings choose to term God's direct, wonderful providences,—which had thrown into Cameron's way the newspaper containing Rachel Hunt's indictment for his murder, inciting the resolve to seek and save her if he could, had rewarded him with a treasure second only to the angel he had lost.

Just after the marriage ceremony, a far-off red light in the south-east shot up from the horizon. It was the season for burning hemp-hurds, and the little bridal-party

gathered at the door to watch the splendid swords of flame, with their dense smoke-wreaths, pierce the clear purple night-heaven. •

About two o'clock that night, a band of sturdy yeomanry with scowling, but satisfied faces, came in from the Wilderness road, and took passage on the steamboat then waiting at the landing to leave by daybreak. They were the same men who followed Tom Carper to the grave:

In the morning, as Rachel was preparing to go with her husband and Mrs. Arnett to Cameron's Cherokee home, a servant of Sylvester Blackburn's came to the door with a request from his mistress that Mr. Cameron and his wife would hasten to her without delay. The man, ashy with terror, could tell nothing but that his mistress was dying; and when Rachel and her husband reached the forks of the road where the outcast orphan had been found by Tom Carper six years before, a sight met their gaze which froze the very blood in their veins. The house of Sylvester Blackburn was a smouldering heap of ruins. His body and his daughter's lay together as if in a death-embrace, a charred, disgusting mass amid the wreck; and on the very spot where Rachel Hunt had lain in her insanity, Dora Blackburn, mangled and dying, clutched at the withered leaves. The wretched woman lived only long enough to say that when the smoke from the flames aroused them out of the first sleep of early night, every window and door was barricaded from without, and armed men, masked, kept back the servants from coming to their rescue or giving an alarm; and that she herself had leaped from the second story and crawled unseen to the road-side. All the earnest

prayers of the forgiving, pitying hearts beside her, failed to bring peace to a soul whose work in life had been guided by the myrmidons of Satan alone; and with a shriek that seemed to come from the bottomless pit itself, she went before the Tribunal where the All-Just alone is Judge.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Yes! thy varying cheek hath caught
Hues too bright from troubled thought.
Far along the wandering stream,
Thou art followed by a dream,—
In the woods and valleys lone,
Music haunts thee not thine own.

HEMANS.

"SANTA MARIA! she sings like a seraph!" said a dark, Spanish-looking officer, dressed in the costume of the United States military service, to a gentleman at his side, in a large school-room in St. Charles street, New Orleans, in the summer of 1825. It was the close of the sixth session of Madame Garcia's school. Her twelve graduates had read their essays there in the morning, to a crowded and brilliant assemblage; and the same company had returned in the evening to attend a concert given for the benefit of an Asylum just established for orphan children whose parents had fallen victims to the ravages of the epidemic the year before. The concert was conducted by her professor of music, Mons. Bordillon, assisted, as the programme read, by several amateurs.

The gentlemen just mentioned had entered toward the close of the evening, and were standing some distance from the stage the musicians occupied. A young female was singing a brilliant aria from Mozart's *Magic Flute*, while the old Professor played a low accompaniment on the piano-forte. She stood with her face to the audience, and her whole figure was distinctly seen by the strangers, though they were not near enough to scan her features. She wore, over a fine embroidered petticoat, a loose flowing robe of white Indian muslin, fastened at the waist by a blue girdle with heavy silken tassels. Her brown wavy hair, brushed loosely back from her forehead, was twisted in a simple knot behind, and fastened with a silver arrow, the only ornament she wore. Beside her stood a young girl of about fifteen summers, dressed in the royal costume of the Cherokee Indians. She wore a skirt of heavy silk, striped in blue and orange, which reached a few inches below the knee, and was trimmed with fringes of gay-colored beads half-way to the waist. The bodice was of a light orange silk, fitting close to the throat, embroidered with beads; and sleeves of the same material fell in long folds from her shoulders, their fringes of beads heightening the transparent color of her arms. She looked, indeed, more like a Creole than an Indian. Her stockings were of fine white silk, with garters made of beads, whose tassels hung half-way to the ankle; and her little feet were neatly cased in moccasins. Her straight black hair hung in long braids curiously interwoven with beads; and on her head was a crown made of the wing feathers of the wren, fastened by a bead embroidery. She accompanied the young amateur in a low, but sweet and musical contralto; and when the piece

was ended, it would have been difficult to tell whether the many bouquets that fell at their feet were offered at the shrine of the young Indian's wonderful beauty, or to the soaring, bird-like music of the frail-looking being beside her. They left the stage amid loud applause; but the encores of the audience were so tumultuous, in a few moments they returned. The Indian maiden walked with the free, proud step of her tribe, and looked up with child-like admiration into the fair face of her companion, as the other paused and ran her slender white fingers over the strings of a guitar suspended from her neck by a blue ribbon, and which she rested on a small pier-table near the front of the stage. She played a slow, sad symphony; but the stillness throughout the room was so profound, every note was distinctly heard, and in a clear but trembling voice she sang:

The wild azalia opes
Her blue cups to the bee,
And timid, trembling shadows hunt
The white clouds o'er the sea;
The wild bee sucks the sweets,
But leaves the flower bereft—
The white clouds crown the setting sun—
The shadows dim are left.

Thus, broken heart, to thee,
The bee of Love hath come,
And after rifling all thy sweets,
Disdained so mean a home;
So, as the evening shades
That sink upon the shore,
Thy dead hopes lie, while, like the sea,
Thou moanest, evermore!

"Tell me who she is!" fiercely exclaimed Robert Blackburn to the officer with whom he had entered the concert-room.

"Santa Clara!" said the other, with a start; "I would as lief have a stiletto in my body, as to have the breath scared out of me after this fashion. If you mean the singer, she is a Miss Fielding from—no place, I believe, who has been teaching for some time in Madame Garcia's school. The story goes that Madame first employed her as under-governess, but finding her capable of better things, promoted her step by step, until now she cannot do without her. The old Professor there says she has a wonderful talent for music. Many an evening have I sat under Madame's balcony, listening to her and the little Indian sing. Mauvilá was a wild, unruly thing when the Cherokee chief brought her here, but she is so fond of Miss Fielding, she has grown under her excellent tuition as docile and elegant a donna as ever graced a drawing-room, though no persuasion can induce her to doff her Indian costume. Indeed, I am told Miss Fielding encourages her to wear it. Professor Badillon wishes Miss Fielding to go with him to Italy, and has promised to place her under the best music-masters, at his own cost; but she steadily refuses to go, I presume because she is too proud to be dependent."

The singer had left the stage before Col. Pontalba ceased speaking, but Robert Blackburn could listen to no more music that night. He left the concert-room and walked into the street; and standing near an old palm-tree near Carondelet street, watched the house until the company left the saloon, and the doors were closed.

About one o'clock that night, as Miss Fielding sat in

her room, a sharp ring of the street bell startled her, and in a few moments a servant at her door announced that a gentleman in the drawing-room wished to see her.

The lights in the chandelier were burning dimly when she entered the room. The stranger stood beneath them, so that she could not see his face. She advanced toward him, and said, in a dignified tone:

"What is your pleasure, sir?"

Robert Blackburn turned, and exclaiming, "Nelly, dear, dear Nelly!" would have caught her in his arms, but she recoiled from him, and with one hand pressed against her forehead, while with the other she waved him from her, she gazed with a wild, fiery look into his face.

He knelt before her.

"See, I am at your feet, Nelly: Oh! will you not let me love you again?"

"Arise," she said, mournfully but firmly. "I had hoped, oh, so devoutly, that I might never see you again! But since you have come, I must say to you what I feel, so that this interview may be the last."

He arose and stood before her.

"I left my peaceful home," she continued, "when but a child, and went with you to yours. I gave a heart full of devotion to you and your family, and a life whose every act was one of service and self-sacrifice; and I received in return, coldness; and contempt, and contumely from them, and severity and neglect from you. But even after they had cast me off, I clung to you, and was willing to do and to bear anything for the sake of the occasional kind words you gave me.

"You remember the rest. You know how I went to you from all I knew and loved, and was denied and

spurned; and when I crept to your feet, and clasping your knees, begged you to let me stay, if only as your servant, for the sake of the child I had borne you, you taunted me with having no pride; and, worst of all, told me you had never loved me, citing as proof the indifference with which you had permitted your family to insult and vilify me."

"But, Nelly, that was done through a hard and impenitent spirit. Oh! can you not forgive and receive me again?"

"Forgive!" she said, and her voice trembled, but she struggled and forced back the tears that gushed up to her eyes. "I forgave you even while you thrust me from you; but when you averred to Col. Pontalba and all around you that you did not know me, and called God to witness the truth of what you said; and then when they had left your room, and you threatened that if I did not go from Natchez, you would take my boy from me and have me imprisoned as insane, every vestige of love died out of my heart, and I fled from the presence of the one whom I had trusted, as if the Arch-fiend himself had been on my track."

"Where did you go, Nelly?" he asked, for he had become so interested in her narrative he seemed to have forgotten *he* had caused the misery of which she spoke.

"Where did I go?" she said. "It matters not to you. I have lived honorably, if obscurely. But, until a year ago, I have never lost sight of you; and if you had ever striven by one act to redeem the past, I might receive you very differently now. After casting me off, however, you went to your old home, and with a mock-sorrow told

them of the death of your wife and child, and your own incurable grief."

"But my boy — *our* boy, Nelly — where is he?"

"Do not," she said, wildly, "do not speak of my child. It is enough that he is dead, and beyond the reach of human misery. Dead!" and the tears rained over her face. "Oh, my child!" she sobbed, "my beautiful, starved, patient lamb! If I might only be one of the dead leaves that fall on thy lonely grave, and moulder away into its holy dust! Do not tell me, Robert Blackburn, that you loved my child. If you had ever loved him, you could not have cast him off, nor have been so cruel to the mother who bore him, whose highest pride was to teach him to lisp your name and pray for you at her knee, while you were disregarding every vow in the pursuit of a something you yourself could not define. But I cannot say I regret your perfidy. You won me before I knew the necessities of my own nature. When I became a woman, I was a wife already; and when the deep, strong voices of my spirit sent forth their enquiries and hopes, they found no echo, but died away into darkness and silence, leaving the chambers of my heart so desolate, I shuddered at the void within me, though I did not know its cause. But you have taken the scales from my eyes, and I thank you for it. If you could be presented to me to-night, a stranger, you are not the person to whom I could give the deep love I am capable of feeling, for there is nothing harmonious between us. Less than ever, then, can I love you now, for I have memory to goad me. If you had never wronged me, my life would have passed in tranquillity, and I might never have known the depths and intensity of my nature.

There is that within me which had never been vivified when you took me to your bosom; and though I may be overwhelmed at times with misery at the knowledge of it, I do not regret that I have learned to know myself. Henceforth, oh God of Love and Truth! by Thine unerring aid will I walk steadily in my own soul's peaceful pathways, nor strive to keep the dusty high-road of a misdirected Destiny, wherein I so long panted beneath the hot sun of a false and most wretched life!"

She stood for a moment silent, while Robert Blackburn watched her features with a bewildered look.

"Oh Nelly!" he sobbed, and again knelt at her feet. "You told me in Natchez that remorse would come. I have wandered hither and thither for the whole past year, seeking you everywhere, with the fullest purpose to redeem, if I could, the wrongs I have done. And now that I have found you—oh, I cannot give you up, and it seems you grow dearer to me the more I am convinced you do not love me."

"Yes," she replied, mournfully, "I remember you told me in Natchez that you prized every thing more in the pursuit than the possession, and that you would soon tire of heaven itself."

"You are so implacable, Nelly—can you not forgive?"

"I have told you you were forgiven, even while inflicting these death-wounds. But how dare I forget—how dare I return to a condition wherein, to all human reason, I would be subjected to the same trials again? You ask more than I can grant. Let me say further, I believe you deceive yourself as regards your own feelings towards me. If you had ever loved me, you could not have forsaken the pure light of my affection for the

wicked smiles of a wanton, nor have suffered any infatuation, however powerful, to drive into beggary and the grave those whom you had vowed to love and protect. True Love is omnipotent, like the Deity; and may never be overcome, even by Death itself. Arise, Robert; I have done, and the night is waning."

"Will you not bless me, Nelly, before I go? Oh, how can I go forth again into the world, so utterly bereft!"

"How have—but no matter."

"Bless me, then, Nelly," he entreated, as he lifted his turbulent features to her calm, mournful face.

She laid her thin hands on his head, and breathed a brief, inaudible prayer. Then saying aloud, "I have ever, ever blessed you," she turned to leave the room.

"Will you not kiss me, Nelly?" he implored. "It is the last time I will ever ask it."

She pressed her trembling lips to his forehead, and went from the drawing-room. Her light step kept its even fall until she reached her room. She waited on the threshold until she heard the heavy street-door close after him, and then falling across the bed, her pent-up anguish was set free, and she shook as if in a convulsion fit.

"Oh God!" she said, as she arose and knelt beside the bed, "Thou who didst reveal to the banished Hagar and her perishing child the fresh, glad water in the wilderness—Thou who didst send Thine Anointed to bring to life the dead boy of the Shunamite, what is *my* sin, that Thou hidest Thyself from me? My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" and with a deep, half-shrieking moan, she fell to the floor.

"Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth," said a tender

voice, and strong but gentle hands lifted the sufferer from the floor, and laid her on the bed.

"You have had some heavy blow, my poor Ellen," said Madame Garcia, as she parted back from the pale forehead the long, dishevelled hair. "Can you not tell me what it is? You have told me of your orphanage and penury, but other and deeper causes have blighted your young life. I have long suspected this, and your sorrow now confirms my conjectures. Confide in me, dear Ellen. You not only do yourself injustice, but you wrong the mother-heart of your best friend, by withholding from her any of your griefs."

"Mother, oh, mother indeed!" said Nelly, as she looked into the truthful face of the noble woman. Then, in a voice mournful as the rustling of autumn leaves, she told the whole of her history, up to the time of Widow Donald's death, when, having no female friend in Bill Donald's house as a protector against the scandal of their little world, circumscribed though it was—and learning that the services of an infant-governess were needed in Madame Garcia's school, she went to the great Southern Metropolis to begin life afresh. No one but Bill Donald knew her history—not even her sisters, though Bill held constant intercourse with them; for she had made him promise never to mention her name to them, inasmuch as she feared her husband's family might discover her, and persecute her afresh. She had been kept informed of her husband's movements from time to time by Bill Donald, whom Madame remembered as a frequent visitor to her since her residence in the school.

"What is your real name, my child?" Madame Garcia asked.

"Ellen Fielding Blackburn, Madame; but when I was—when I went to live with Widow Donald I was known only as Ellen Fielding to the settlers, and as such I came to you."

"Not so to remain with me, however; but as my daughter, my prized and excellent child," said the weeping woman, as she wound her arms around the sorrowing young creature beside her.

"As your child, Madame—and oh! where is mine? My boy, the one single white blossom in the tangled weeds of my life's wilderness, cut down by the noxious worm of an inscrutable fate, and lying now in that black, lonely forest, where the tempests rave and the wild beasts gnash their teeth."

"Nay, Ellen—not there, but safe beneath the sheltering Tree of Life, in the bosom of the Good Shepherd. Think," continued Madame Garcia, "if he were in this world, driven from you by your own act, roving you knew not whither—perhaps in the midst of danger and disease, or, worse than all, surrounded by temptation and sin."

"Then I should die," Nelly said. "I could not live without my child, if he were in the world."

"There are some with a deeper grief than yours, who have been compelled not only to live, but to make life useful and pleasant to others, Ellen; besides bearing in their bosoms a pang you never felt—the barbed sting of remorse. But it is nearly daylight, and we both need rest after the fatigues of yesterday." She closed the soft curtains of the bed, and left the room.

It was nearly noon next day when Nelly arose. She had just thrown on a light morning robe, when a servant entered the room with a letter. It was from Robert

Blackburn, announcing his determination to leave the United States, but without mentioning his destination, and requesting her to write to him under cover of Col. Pontalba's address, and tell him if she would consent to receive and answer occasional letters from him. He seemed harrowed by grief, and wrote, if she could ever love him again, his heart was open to receive her.

Her tears were falling like rain, when a low knock at the door aroused her. Wiping them hastily away, she turned the key, and Mauvila entered.

"The child of the Oak-Leaf's sister must return to her people," she said. "The men and horses wait at Mobile even now, to take her home; and the Oak-Leaf wishes the White Lily to go also. He will give her the price of his hunting-horse for every moon she will remain with the Cherokees, if she will go and teach the young daughters of his tribe. Will the White Lily go? The leaping waters of the Black Warrior, as they spring through the mountain rifts, make richer music than the church-organ of the Pale Face, and the mocking-bird and grosbeak sing a sweeter anthem than the choir."

"I will go," said Nelly, through her tears.

In the afternoon Madame Garcia entered Nelly's chamber with an anxious look.

"Mauvila tells me you are going away," she said. "Can you not be happy with me, Ellen?"

"Oh! can I ever be happy anywhere again?" Nelly sobbed, and handed Madame Garcia Robert Blackburn's letter.

Madame read it attentively. "You will not answer it?" she enquired.

"I have already done so, Madame," Nelly replied.

"I have told him if he will, by a better life, prove himself worthy, I will give him as true a love as I ever gave him, and be to him all I have been."

"And thus sacrifice yourself for life," said Madame Garcia. "Ellen, you know there is no harmony between you; and that he does not, because he cannot, understand the depths and yearnings of your spirit. Why go to him again, then, when your own peace will be forever bartered, and his life rendered no happier? — for believe me, if he had ever been formed for domestic happiness, he would not so idly have cast it from him."

"Oh, Madame," Nelly replied, in broken tones, "I have neither eaten nor slept since he left me. I can see nothing before me but his troubled, beseeching face, and I have suffered too much myself to be willing to give pain to others — least of all to the father of my dead child. It is idle to talk to me about happiness any more; but I can find peace, if no more, in the consciousness that I have done all in my power to make him happy, even though all joy be gone from my own life. I know he does not suit me; I know if I had not seen him until my mind and tastes were developed, he would not have been my choice. But that is not now to be considered. I know it is a bitter, death-cold hour to a sanguine, trustful spirit; when the relentless conviction comes, that there is no such thing as perfection — that the brightest flowers wither, and that the clearest, purest brooks foster the slimy periwinkle. But I can find content in life, and if not the most exquisite, at least the most abiding enjoyment in the full assurance of duty well-performed. I must learn to be satisfied with honesty of purpose; for congeniality and perfect joy are found in the angel world."

alone. And then, Madame, how can I pray, 'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us,' if I am unwilling to imitate the holy example of the Forsaken One?"

Madame Garcia laid her hand on Nelly's upturned forehead.

"My noble, self-sacrificing child," she said, "there is a God of mercy and justice in the heavens. Oh, may He call back to your sinless life the flowers and fruits of happiness, and give to your lips the brimming cup of gladness. But why do you leave me?"

"Because Robert may think, after receiving my letter, that he can win me back without a thorough reformation; and if he should come, I do not feel equal to another interview with him."

"Why not go to Italy, then, with Professor and Madame Bordillon?"

"Because, Madame, I do not think I am fitted for a public life. If I have the capacities to win the world's laurels, as you think, I have a heart also. I love the quiet joys of home, where all female gifts and graces find their truest, loveliest theatre. But since I may never have a home, I desire to teach the youth of my own sex, as far as I am capable, how to make theirs happy and heavenly, and to avoid the quicksands that have swallowed up all the hopes of a life designed by the Giver, I do believe, to be serene and useful."

CHAPTER XXV.

Yet on her spirit hath arisen at last

A light, a joy, of its own wanderings born —
Around her path a vision's glow is cast —

Back, back her lost one comes in hues of morn!
For her the gulf is filled, the dark night fled,
Whose mystery parts the living and the dead.

HEMANS.

THE fervid light of a June sunset fell softly through the gorges of the mountains west of the Tsulakeechee, one of the beautiful sources of the Black Warrior. The hills clustered to the very brink of the stream, where they were broken into huge, dark cliffs, overgrown with cedar and pine, over whose stems clambered the white Cherokee rose and bind-weed, while the crimson Cardinal flower stood stately as a turbaned Turk among the rocks within whose hoary fissures the sweet, wild heliotrope strove vainly to hide itself.

On the other shore, a long level stretched away eastward. Part of the land had been cleared, and, on the northern portion, a tribe of Cherokees had built a village comprising about fifty houses of hewn logs, chinked with lime-plaster, and securely covered with boards. Each house had a spacious yard, garden, and orchard, neatly enclosed by a white-washed picket. The fields they tended lay in the rear of the village.

One of the houses, especially, had an air of comfort above the rest. It was built of logs, like the others, but consisted of four large rooms, divided by wide passages

running at right angles, and was occupied by the chief and his family. The yard was covered with the native grass of the country, and was without flowers, except the rosy plumes of the crape-myrtle and the scarlet blossoms of the trumpet-flower, that peered through the foliage of the catalpa trees.

From one of the rooms of this dwelling, Nelly Blackburn issued with Mauvila, and following the only street in the village, a wide, beautiful avenue, which led to a wooden bridge across the Toulakeechee, they were soon up the cliffs and seated on one of the wildest crags, watching the sunlight shimmer through the pecan-boughs, and fall like the foot-prints of angels upon the stream below.

"I did not dream such a pleasure was in store for me," Nelly said. "I knew the Strong Arm years ago, when I lived in a little cabin on the banks of the Great River. But why did you never mention him to me before I came among your people?"

"The Strong Arm has been long gone from his people until now," the girl replied. "Many moons ago, he returned with the medicine-woman, with whom he always went in her journeys to gather herbs, for he loved, also, to chase the deer and buffalo. But he turned strangely away from his tribe, and sat apart, until at last he laid his blanket at the feet of his brother, the Oak Leaf, and left the wigwam. He came no more until it was time for his mother to go for the healing roots; and never since has he been with his people except to come for her and bring her back. But before his return in the moon of buffaloes, the medicine-woman took my mother to the Life-Spring by the Serene River, fifty

miles away, for her black eyes had grown dim, and the copal balsam failed to give her strength. The Oak Leaf went with them, and left a request that the Strong Arm should take his place beside the council-fire. Since then the Strong Arm has remained with the tribe, but he is gone to-day on a bear-hunt. Maloleka says he told her he would be back at sunset, and a Cherokee never breaks his word."

A crackling of dry twigs up the cliff drew their notice, and a tall Indian leaped down the crags and stood before them. He knew Mauvila by her dress, and kissed her on the cheek; but he paused for an instant before her companion, as if bewildered. Nelly advanced, and taking his brawny hand, said in a voice tremulous with feeling,

"Has the Strong Arm forgotten the Mocking-Bird of the Wilderness?"

"Does the gray rock forget to echo the piping of the partridge, or the brown earth to send up its tribute of blossoms to the sunshine? The Strong Arm could as soon forget the Great Spirit, as the Bird that sings to him in his dreams."

"See, the Teacher!" cried Mauvila, with a shout, as a skiff shot out into the stream from the deep shadow of a tree on the opposite shore. Then springing down the rocks, she waited on the shore till the boat drew near enough for her to step in, and in another moment she was seated by a gentleman in the stern of the boat. A stout Indian youth busily plied the oars, and they were soon out of sight.

"Who is he?" said Nelly, who had caught a glimpse of the stranger's face, and could see he was not an Indian.

"He has been many moons teaching the youth of the Cherokees," replied the Strong Arm.

"Is he the Great Teacher of whom you so often spoke to Mother Donald and myself in the wilderness?"

"Nay; the Great Teacher wears a robe, and gives the Bread of Life to the worshippers in the temple of the Pale Face, by the Life-Spring, where Mauvila's mother tarries with the medicine-woman and Oak Leaf. But he comes often to the Cherokees, and teaches them in the school-house of the White Letter."

"And who is the White Letter?"

"He who sits with Mauvila in the canoe. He came to the tribe three years after the Great Teacher; but he is not less beloved than his white brother, for he has proven to the Cherokees, by the wonders of the earth, and air, and heaven, the truths of the religion of the Great Teacher and his race. Through the lessons of these two strange brethren, one of our people has been led to don the priestly robes, and is now waiting, in a College by the upper seas, to be consecrated to the service of the Great Spirit, so that he may read the Book of Life to his nation, and with his own hands sign them with the sign of the Crucified."

"And who is he?" Nelly asked with increasing interest.

"He is brother to Maloleka, who, as you know, is the daughter of the Swift-Arrow. Their father was killed by a bear when they were children; and since the death of their mother, four years ago, Maloleka's brother has visited his people but once. He came a year ago, and brought with him the marble shaft gleaming yonder through the willow branches over Monica's grave."

"What is his name?"

"He was called Red Moccasin until his baptism, when he took the name of Matthew Mahon."

"Mathew Mahon!" she exclaimed.

"Yes," the Strong Arm replied. "The Great Teacher had talked of one whom he loved in earlier years, who bore the name, and the Red Moccasin chose it for his own. See, across the water, the Cherokees at work among the trees. They are clearing away the undergrowth to plant a home for him when he returns."

"And when will he come?"

"In early autumn. The White Letter has planned a chapel to be built beside the school-house, which will be ready by the time he arrives. The Cherokees scarcely love their Chief more than the White Letter; and the Strong Arm knows no difference between them, for the White Letter has been like a brother to Mauvila's mother, who, the Mocking-Bird knows, has been insane from the birth of her daughter."

Nelly did not know, for Mauvila had never alluded to her mother's condition. But she scarcely heeded the Strong Arm's words, for the name of old Father Mahon called up recollections she had striven to bury forever; and her thoughts, painfully busy between conjecture and surprise, kept her spell-bound to her seat until her companion warned her that night was coming on.

Her step was slow and heavy as she walked with the Strong Arm to the Oak Leaf's dwelling. So lately the actor in a most unexpected and heart-rending scene, she shuddered as the name of her old pastor brought up memory after memory, like a throng of prophet-spectres; and the awful afflictions which followed his death seemed

to be renewed again with even greater poignancy, making her insensible to every thing around her, though the dash of the waterfall below the village came up like a shout, and the birds in the bushes twittered their vesper-hymn with the same joyous sweetness that had fallen like angel-comfortings upon her ear when she first listened to their melody on her arrival at the village in the morning.

"'Tis a glad day for the Cherokees," the Strong Arm said, when they entered the yard in front of the house, "a glad day that brings the Young Wren back to the old summer nest," and his fine eyes flashed as he looked toward Mauvila, who, laughing merrily, sat beside the White Letter on the wide log steps, in the pleasant moonlight, so occupied in recounting her experiences in the great city, she did not notice their approach.

"Will the White Letter take by the hand the young Teacher who has come to instruct the maidens of the Cherokee tribe?" said the Strong Arm as he led Nelly to the steps where Mauvila and her friend were sitting. The stranger arose and took her extended hand. She looked up in his face, but her eyes fell, and she staggered blindly to the logs and sat down. The Indian, without noticing her agitation, entered the house to deposit his rifle, and Mauvila followed him. They were left alone.

"Nelly," said the stranger, in a voice she had not forgotten, "Nelly of the glen, whom I lifted from the Silverhorn, fifteen years ago!"

"The same, yet not the same," she murmured, and buried her face in her hands.

It had been decided, when Nelly met the party of Cherokees sent to Mobile to escort her and Mauvila to

the village, that her labors as teacher should not commence until autumn, as the summer was already begun. A few days after their arrival, therefore, Mauvila entreated her to accompany her to the Life-Spring, as they still called the beautiful Tishamingo spring to which the Red Moccasin and his sister had guided Edgar Cameron in their childhood, and whither Mauvila's mother had been taken several months before. Maloleka had urged the young girl to remain longer in the village, for she was the pride and joy of all her people; but she had been more than a year separated from her mother, and would listen to no persuasion to remain longer away.

When the Strong Arm found Mauvila's purpose could not be shaken, he determined to go with her; and joining his entreaties with hers, held out a flattering prospect for Nelly if she would accompany them; but she preferred rest and quiet, and felt that the solitary life she would lead with Maloleka would be happier far than the most engaging scenes and society, to a heart broken and harrowed as hers had been. Her first impulse, after she recognized her early deliverer in the White Letter, was to fly, she cared not whither; but the heart-wrung conclusion of a long night's sleepless thinking, decided her to remain where she was, as safest for her peace of mind. There was another reflection, too, which had induced her to refuse to go from the first. Bill Donald, who had visited Kentucky two years before, to attend the wedding of Lucy Bracken and Tony Langford, and to win from little Amy, then nineteen, a promise that she would be his wife at the end of three years,—had learned all the particulars of Tom Carper's suicide, the rescue of Rachel Hunt by Edgar Cameron, their marriage shortly after,

and their permanent removal to the home of the Indians who saved Cameron's life. All these things he had communicated to her; and though she had never known to what tribe of Indians her friends had gone, she felt sure, from all she had heard in the village, that the Great Teacher and his wife were identical with Cameron and Rachel Hunt. A sickening terror, therefore, which she could not conquer, made her shudder when the Strong Arm and Mauvila importuned her to go; for though her soul yearned for the sympathy she knew Rachel Hunt was always ready to offer, she could not find courage to recount the afflictions that had made her shrink and hide even from all she loved, as if she had been a branded Pariah. She felt, too, that a crisis was approaching: that the fate which had cut her off from all earthly ties as effectually as if she really lay in the early grave her sisters mourned, was soon to be changed; and she saw the need of quiet and meditation to prepare herself for the resumption of connections from which she could no longer stand aloof, after the marriage of Bill Donald and her sister, which she knew must soon take place, and when, she had promised him, she would reveal herself to her sisters.

CHAPTER XXVI.

And as I gazed upon her face,
It seemed that I could dimly trace
Dear lineaments long lost of yore.

T. B. READ.

A FEW days after the return of the Strong Arm from the Life-Spring, as Nelly sat knitting in the open entry of the Oak Leaf's dwelling, the Indian entered and sat down beside her. He came to deliver a message from Mauvila, who would remain until the return of her mother in autumn; but after he had accomplished his errand, he sat for some time silent, as if there were other words he wished to say.

"The Strong Arm has wandered far and long," he said at last, "since he first heard the Mocking-bird sing. He has slept under the tent of the Sioux, where the silvery sources of the Great River lie between the white banks, like the laughing babes of the Pale Faces in the arms of their mother; he has eaten beetle-bread and clover with the naked Apaches, while the bald-eagle screamed from the Madré peaks, and the red-eyed cougar cried like a little child. But the song of the white Mocking-bird has followed him everywhere. She has told him of the providences of the God she worships, and he believes the Great Spirit has guided her hither, that the heart of the Strong Arm may give her a safer shelter

than the traitor of whom she moaned in her wild sleep in the wigwam."

Nelly looked up, surprised and grieved.

"The daughter of the Pale Face scorns the love of the Copperskin," he said bitterly, as he arose to go away.

"Nay, nay," she said, and rising hastily, caught him by the hand, "but the Mocking-bird's heart is broken, and she can sing glad songs no more. She loves the Strong Arm with all a sister's tenderness: is not this enough?"

He left the house without replying. Nelly looked after him until he was out of sight, and then went to her room, and laying her cheek on the window-sill, gazed out into the lonely night. Ay, look and weep, Nelly. The young leaves will come again in Spring, and the dancing waters from the hills, but never again the footsteps that were readiest to do thy bidding. Sagittarius will stalk amid the stars with his drawn bow, but never again wilt thou hear the whiz of the arrow that brought down the feathered quarry for thy delicate fare. He is gone, with a love as holy and true as the holiest feel, to be forgotten, after a little while, like a sad though pleasant dream.

Day after day passed, and though they said it was the habit of the Strong Arm to go and come without warning, Nelly was not satisfied, but felt a strange grief, akin to self-reproach, which she could not understand. The society of the White Letter, however, beguiled her from reflections sadder even than the memory of the Indian; and, in a short time, a serenity to which she had long been a stranger took the place of dejection and unrest. Godfrey Rosenberg seemed from the first evening of her arrival, to comprehend the feeling that made her avoid

all intercourse with her kind; and though for several days he remained away from the house of the Oak Leaf, by degrees his visits were renewed, and it became his constant care to anticipate her wishes and minister to all her wants. Choice books and fine old pictures he had gathered around him, in lieu of human companionship in his self-exile from the world, served to bring many a bright gleam to eyes whence joy had seemed forever banished, and the flush that had reddened the cheek of the twelve-years' child while she related to him the legend of the White Eagle Cliff, came back to her pale face as she rambled with him and Maloleka through the wild mountain passes, or floated down the Tsulakeechee in his gay Indian boat, while the young Cherokee rowers listened with suspended oars to the low soft melody of the cithern, as the White Letter's fingers ran over the silver strings.

"I know I do not trust you unwisely," said Nelly to him one afternoon as they sat under one of the overhanging crags of the Tsulakeechee, while Maloleka and a group of young Indian girls below them were busily arranging long wreaths of crimson pinks and ivy for Monica's grave. "I have told you more of my wayward fancies, as others might call them, than I ever expected to utter; for I had come to the conclusion no one would ever understand me."

"And yet you are by no means incomprehensible," said her companion, with a smile, "I read in the little girl of twelve years all I see in the woman of twenty-seven. I see more, too, than you imagine, Nelly," he continued in a gentle tone, "I see glimpses of a sorrow which has well-nigh driven you into the grave, and a dis-

appointment which has taken from your thoughts the hopeful light they merit. Can you not trust me further, and tell me all your heart yearns to confide even now? I do believe I can guard your secret, whatever it may be, as sacredly as the lost Mabel you loved so much in your early home. Home," he continued, as if his thoughts had wandered, "what a holy and happy place it is! The refuge from toil and unrest, the sanctum sanctorum, where the heart—its treasures laid up in the Ark of Love, and guarded by the two watchful cherubim, Truth and Trust—may go with the censer of gratitude, and hold high intercourse with the Giver of all Good, safe from the boisterous world's unrighteous influence. But alas! how few have a home! The grandest piles of architecture, the costliest tapestried rooms, have often less of peace within their walls than the humblest hut in this wilderness which Love's alchemy has touched. 'Better a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.'"

"You speak bitterly," said Nelly sadly.

"Ay," he replied, "and I have the right. I had a home once, happy as yours, Nelly, till my sire died, and my mother gave his place to a worthless Spanish noble, who, because I scorned to give my hand without my heart to his beautiful daughter, poisoned my mother's mind against me, and was the cause of my exile from the roof that had echoed no sounds but the harmonies of affection, until his foul breath polluted its atmosphere, and the harpies of discord fed upon its peace."

"And yet there are some who teach us God orders all such things for our good," Nelly said.

"Then there is not much labor left for him who, 'as a

roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour,'" responded Rosenberg. "They may call me Kantianneologist, blasphemer, anything they will, but I cannot agree with those who affirm that Providence directs all these things. The God I worship has nothing to do with such dissonance and misery as crown with thorns the lives of some of his noblest creatures. If the cruel, the selfish, the malicious, and—worst foes of all!—the *short-sighted*, would leave the right-minded and true-hearted alone, many a life now parched like a desert, would bloom in beauty, fragrant with the flowers of a fruitful, happy nature."

"Oh, is it strange, then," Nelly said, "that my soul pants to leave its shell of clay, and, like the shining chrysalis, float away into the tranquil atmosphere of a stormless heaven, 'where the weary are at rest,' and where I may have the society of those to whom my soul turns, even in this bitter life, with a yearning past the power of words? If there were no life beyond the grave for me; if I had not the certainty that in the immortal existence I shall live forever with those for whom I cherish a devotion stronger than death; the burthen of this life would be more than I could bear. Oh! let me believe that in the Shadowless Land I shall clasp again the dear, kind hands whose tender pressure never was refused me, that I shall hear again the tones that never fell on my ear in coldness or complaint, that I shall listen again to the eloquent words that have thrilled my soul with their majestic melody—and no sorrow will be too great for me to bear, no sacrifice impossible."

Her companion gazed at her with a perplexed, enquiring look.

"I see you will not trust me," he said, as she arose to go.

She looked at him through her tears, and her lips quivered as if she meant to speak, but the next instant a crimson flush mantled her face, and, bidding him a simple goodbye, as if she preferred returning without him, she started homeward with her Indian companions. After they crossed the bridge, Maloleka pointed to a building the workmen were just leaving for the day, and proposed that Nelly should go with her to look at the house they were preparing for the new teacher, Matthew Mahon. It was built after the fashion of the Oak Leaf's dwelling, but the grounds were more extensive and already were beautifully arranged, for Mauvila was to be his bride in the Moon of Turkeys,* and the women of the village had devoted the summer to its adornment. Nelly had received frequent letters from the young bride-elect, which were brought her by the hunters of the tribe. She wrote of her lover — to whom she had been betrothed a year — in the glowing language of a spirit ignorant of sorrow; and of her dear, stricken mother, who, though feebler than when she left her the previous summer, seemed steadier in mind, giving hope to her family that her long-dormant intellect might yet be awakened. Mauvila spoke also of the Great Teacher's family, and described in her last letter a beautiful home, fitted up near the Life-Spring by a friend of the Teacher who had gone to the West for his wife

It was a clear, sober evening in October when the Oak Leaf and his family returned. Nelly and Maloleka were

* November.

out among the hills when they came, but the shouts of the village youths, and the bonfires blazing along the Tsulakecchêe, told them the wedding guests had arrived. It was dusk when they reached the house, and Mauvila's mother, worn with travel, had been taken to her room to rest. But the old medicine-woman, with the Oak Leaf and Mauvila, sat at the entrance fronting the street. The old woman had been prepared in the summer by the Strong Arm, for the meeting with Nelly, and she listened, with the Oak Leaf, in pride to the sincere admiration which Nelly bestowed upon their beautiful Indian home. But a low cough from Mauvila's room startled them, and they left her alone with Maloleka and her young companion.

"Where is your bridegroom, Mauvila?" Nelly asked.

"He is gone with his friends to his own dwelling," she replied.

"And who are his friends?"

"The teacher from the Life-Spring, with two others of his race, and their beautiful wives," she said. "They came to the door of my mother's wigwam the day before we left, and talked to me as the White Lily does. My heart trembled to their kind words, like a blossom in the wind."

"Did you say the Great Teacher had a wife?" It was the first question Nelly had ever ventured to ask about him.

"Yes," the girl replied, "a young wife he found far away to the North, who lives among the Cherokees by the Spring, like a sister, teaching their maidens to be womanly and industrious; and filling her husband's heart

with a happiness that brightens every day. But see, he is coming!" and her clear cheek flushed with happiness.

Edgar Cameron entered the gate, accompanied by a handsome half-breed, whose manly proportions still bore a strong resemblance to the graceful contour of the Red Moccasin. The outline of his features, severely regular, was strikingly like his mother's, and the same grave dignity characterized his face, except that the stern expression was softened by a complexion so much fairer than hers, his Indian blood would scarcely have been detected. Nelly trembled as Edgar Cameron approached, and her agitation increased when she discovered he seemed to recognize her. As he drew nearer, however, he halted, and appeared as if waiting to be presented. Mauvila took her hand, and leading her to meet them, said simply,

"See, the White Lily, who loved the dark Cherokee well enough to leave the gardens of the great city, and come to blossom in these mountain solitudes."

"The God who sendeth the sunshine and the shower upon the lowly harebell, will bless the Lily in her single-hearted purpose," was the earnest reply, as the fine eyes of the speaker looked kindly upon Nelly's agitated features. She bent her head and tried to speak, but her voice failed her, and she sobbed aloud.

Edgar Cameron was troubled. "Forgive the freedom with which I have spoken," he said. "Your face is so like that of one I loved years ago, I have offered praise without reflection, forasmuch as my heart told me the resemblance must be more than an outward likeness."

Nelly raised her head. They were alone. Without speaking, she led the way to a seat beneath a catalpa tree. Edgar Cameron followed, and sat down beside her.

"Tell me what grieves you," he said. "Although I am a stranger to you, yet"—

She lifted her brimming eyes to his face.

"And you, too, have forgotten me," she murmured; "you, whom I loved so dearly, on whose knee I have sat and sung,—oh, what a wretched outcast I must be!"

He looked at her searchingly. "Nelly, my bright, merry-hearted, little Nelly, my darling Mabel's pet, whom I have so long mourned as dead," he said at last, as he clasped her trembling hand. "Poor lamb, poor lonely lamb," he continued, while he stroked her glossy hair, "so gentle and loving, to be left exiled and uncared-for in this strange wilderness. But where have you been, Nelly? Tony Langford told me you were dead. Why have you never written to any of your family?"

"Do not ask me," she said wildly. I should go mad to recount the experiences of the past seven years. But talk to me,—tell me about Lu and Amy, and Bill and Tony, and all I loved when I was a child,—tell me about the graves at home, and the school-house spring, and the Silverhorn; but do not, do not ask me about myself."

"Come with me, Nelly," Edgar Cameron said, as he arose. "Tony is at the residence of Matthew Mahon, with others you have known and loved. We will talk together there, of every thing you please to mention."

She went to Mauvila's door, and telling her intention to go to Matthew Mahon's residence to see some friends, tied on her hat and left the house. On their way they were joined by Godfrey Rosenberg who had started to take his accustomed walk with her; and they went on in silence to the new dwelling which had been finished for the bridal pair.

"Pshaw, Bill, you will be a clown in spite of all my efforts to make a gentleman of you," said a glad, girlish voice, as Nelly and her companions stepped into the entry. They passed into the room whence the merry laugh issued. Two young females were standing near the open fire-place, while Tony Langford sat, his eyes filled with tears of laughter, watching Bill Donald try to dance. Nelly glanced at Tony and Bill, but her eyes were riveted on the other figures; and sobbing, "My sisters, Lu and Amy," she fainted at their feet.

When she opened her eyes, she was lying in one of the pleasant rooms of Matthew Mahon's house, the full moon shining calmly upon her through the open casement. Godfrey Rosenberg sat beside her, smoothing the long brown curls from her forehead; and the unaltered, beautiful face of Rachel Hunt bent above her.

"Rachel," she said, as if bewildered, "is it Rachel? And my sisters,—oh Godfrey, was it all a dream?" Rachel Hunt hurried from the room.

"Your sisters are here, Nelly," Rosenberg replied. "You went out of a fainting fit into a quiet sleep, and they left you for a little while, to sit in the entry. But I stayed to watch your slumber, dearest," he continued, as he took her thin hand into the warm, tender clasp of his own. She withdrew it instantly, and burying her face in the white bed-clothes, wept bitterly.

Godfrey Rosenberg went home that night with a strange trouble in his heart.

CHAPTER XXVII.

CONCLUSION.

THE wedding-day came at length. Nelly had not been able to go to the house of the Oak Leaf since the night of her sisters' arrival, but insisted upon attending the wedding; and Godfrey Rosenberg took her in a light calèche he had brought from Mobile the summer before.

"I do not see Mauvila's mother," she said to the young bride, after the marriage ceremony, as her eyes ran over the assembled guests.

"She is too feeble to leave her room, but wishes to see the Teacher and his friends at her bedside."

Matthew Mahon took her by the hand and went with her to the chamber of her mother. Nelly and the rest followed them; and with solemn feelings entered the room of the insane. She sat up in the bed as they approached; but instead of the dark olive complexion of the Cherokee, Nelly saw a face of the whitest, most death-like transparency, and a pair of black eyes bent on them with a searching look. The delirious vacancy of the face was gone,—the pale lips parted, uttering in broken pauses,

"Nelly, and Lucy, and Amy, and Tony, and Edgar,—all but mine, all but mine!" and the poor crazed head fell back upon the pillows.

"Lina, dear Lina!" sobbed the heart-broken sisters, and wildly the new bride fell upon the bed and kissed the shrunken lips. But never more might that mouth

return the thrilling kiss, nor those ears listen to the tones of love or grief. It had gone home, — crushed heart that through the long fifteen years had never once uttered the sorrow which had driven Reason from her throne.

There was a more fearful grief than Nelly's to be ministered to that night; for the fierce red glare in Mauvila's eyes boded a fate like her hapless mother's, and all else was forgotten in efforts to soothe her sorrow. But by the evening of the next day she was composed and quiet, and they prepared her mother's body for burial. After she was laid in the plain wooden coffin, Nelly and her sisters sat beside it while the old medicine-woman told them Lina's history. The party of Cherokees encamped near Mr. Van Zandt's, found her two days after she left Lily Dell, thirty miles below the White Eagle church; and being unable to learn from her incoherent replies anything of her home or family, the old medicine-woman who was with the party determined to take her as a daughter. Two months after their return to the Tennessee river, Mauvila was born, but never knew she was not of their tribe until her wedding-night.

A few hours before the burial, Edgar Cameron and Matthew Mahon stood beside the dead body alone.

"Strange," said the former, "that the face which I remember so distinctly now, should never have appeared to me as the face of the lost Lina. And yet how could I imagine it, when I was told she was drowned in the Elkhorn, and when the poor dementate soul looking through those vacant eyes was so different from the contented, peaceful spirit I had known in Lily Dell!"

Mathew Mahon looked at him as if every glance had

been a sword, so piercing was it, and stalked gloomily from the house.

Lina Morton was buried in the garden of Mauvila's new home. Nelly, overborne by the exciting scenes through which she had passed, fell into a slow fever, and for several weeks lingered between life and death. She was taken with Mauvila to the new home, wherein such merry wedding festivities had been anticipated, now darkened by bereavement as startling as it was afflicting. Edgar Cameron and Rachel returned to their residence by the Tishamingo spring, where a body of the Cherokees had remained when the Oak Leaf settled on the Tsulakeechee. But Lu and Amy, with their husbands, determined to remain until the improved health of both invalids should secure their minds against all anxiety. Mauvila, with her strong, unbroken health, recovered first. During her illness, her husband's devotion was remarked by all the household, together with a strange abstraction of manner, and a stern reserve, which made a striking contrast with the love he evidently struggled to conceal. Though there were watchers to stay with her continually, no persuasion could induce him to leave her. Every day his hand alone administered medicine and food; at night his couch was spread by her bedside, and the slightest sigh or moan was enough to bring him to her service. But no kiss was ever imprinted upon her beautiful lips, no caress ever offered her, no clasp of the hand even; and she herself, when consciousness returned, quick-sighted as she was, could not guess why he who had been so frank and loving once, should be so cold and distant now.

One day, shortly after her recovery, she was sitting with the rest on the gallery before the house, when Matthew Mahon entered. He had been absent several days, having gone to the Life-Spring to see Edgar Cameron, as he said, on urgent business. Mauvila, with the quick impulses of a heart that had never known check nor thwarting, ran to meet him; but he held her from him as if unwilling to receive her embrace. She trembled at first, but a red glow quickly mounted to her forehead, and her eyes flashed.

"The mood of the Teacher is strange," she said. "The son of the Swift Arrow and the Mohawk forgets the high spirit of his race when he scorns a woman, and worst of all, the one who has come to live with him in his lodge, and sing the songs of the Great Spirit while she makes his priestly robes."

"Nay," he said, still refusing her extended hand, "the daughter of the Pale Face made her vows to the Cherokee when she believed herself to be one of his people. Has she thought of the contempt her brotherhood feel for the Indian, and the degradation her marriage with a Red Skin will bring upon her?"

"The white wife of the Cherokee knows no higher honor than what her husband calls a degradation, no greater happiness than to lie in his faithful bosom; and she will spurn from her, without a pang, any and all who dare sneer at the darker hue of her husband's skin. The Wren of the Wilderness has known no people but the noble Cherokees, who made her their petted child. She would die among the Pale Faces, though their blood runs in her veins. May she stay then in her husband's tent, and live among his people?"

He drew her to his bosom, and passed with her into the house.

During Nelly's protracted illness, Tony Langford received news of Mr. Van Zandt's death, and leaving in charge of an overseer the fine farm to which he had recently removed, he returned with Lucy to Kentucky, to protect his widowed mother, and take care of the graves. Amy and Bill urged Nelly to go with them to the comfortable home Bill had built on the spot where his mother died, but she refused to leave Mauvila. A few days after their departure she received, under cover from Madame Garcia, a letter which retarded her convalescence for several weeks longer; and she determined, at last, without mentioning its contents to any one, to go to Rachel and Edgar Cameron, and relieve her heart of a load which threatened to sever every string. She remained with them but a few days, and upon her return, made known to Matthew Mahon and Mauvila the necessity of her immediate departure from the village.

She was sitting by the smouldering fire the evening after her return from Edgar Cameron's, with the letter which had given her so much unhappiness lying open on her lap, when Godfrey Rosenberg entered.

"I must go away," she said, as he sat down beside her.

"Go, Nelly? Go whither?"

"To Mobile. If I should never see you again, Edgar Cameron will tell you many things I desired to say, but could not."

"You do not mean to remain away, Nelly?"

"I will come back if I live," she said. "But sorrow

has sapped the fountains of my life, and I may not live to return."

"Do not talk so hopelessly, Nelly. Oh!" he continued, "if you could only know how dear you are to me, how through all vicissitudes for the last fifteen years your memory has haunted me wherever I have been, you would permit me at least to make the effort to plant again in the waste places of your heart the flowers of Love and Happiness. Live, dear Nelly, oh, live for my sake!" he entreated, as the heavy sobs broke from her throat.

"I cannot," she said, "I dare not. There is a dreadful Destiny over me, which shuts out every gleam of hope."

"Oh, Nelly," he urged, "I know you have mistaken your condition. If you would only confide in me, I might lift the cloud, and let the glad sunlight enter your soul again. But you doubt my sincerity. Nelly, I went back to the little glen after three years of wandering, determined to seek and secure you if I could. I was riding down the gorge below the White Eagle, when I heard a wagoner say carelessly to his comrade that you were that day to be wedded. Then I sat down under the old sycamore, and while the wind raved fiercely through the bare tulip trees, I painted the scene as I first beheld it, with you lying like a crushed flower in the Silverhorn. If you could know how I grieved, after I had gone many miles that night, and discovered I had lost the velvet tablet-case my mother had given me, wherein I placed the little painting, you would believe there is such a thing as constancy in the human heart. And I could tell you more, Nelly—I could tell you of a wild devotion that had well-nigh driven me to be an assassin the night before

you entered Louisville, when your heart received the first dastardly blow that broke it."

Nelly trembled from head to foot as she drew from her pocket the tablet-case she had found on her wedding-day. It was soiled and faded, for it was in the pocket of her dress when the Strong Arm rescued her from the river. She opened it, and touching a delicate spring, the picture was revealed, uninjured and beautiful as ever. She looked at it for a moment, and said, in low, heart-broken tones:

"I do believe in Truth, and Love, and Goodness, but they are not for me. I found this tablet-case on a terrible and fearful day. I do not know why I kept it, for I did not discover the picture it contains until a year ago. But I have no right to it, and have sinned in keeping it thus long."

She handed it to him, but he offered it back with a reproachful look.

"Will you not keep it for the sake of the love I bear you?" he said, in a pleading tone.

She looked at him wildly. "Godfrey," she said, "if you have any pity on me, take it. It makes me feel so miserable and — and hopeless."

She laid it in his hand and fled from the room — fled away, away into the dim, spectral woods, where the moonlight lay like a tattered shroud, and there, under the eye of God alone, she wept, and struggled, and prayed — *and triumphed*.

The next day she was on her way to Mobile. The letter she had received was from Robert Blackburn, who was dying in that city. He had written to her through Madame Garcia, imploring her to come to him, that she

might bless him once again before he died, and then seal the penitent eyes that had shed such bitter tears for having wronged her once. Faithfully she watched by him for two long months, when, humbled and repentant, he went to the untried world, breathing with his latest sigh a blessing on the true heart he had so wantonly broken.

When she returned to the Cherokee village, Godfrey Rosenberg was gone. He had left a letter for her with Matthew Mahon, in which he told her business of great importance required his presence away, and that he might be absent until April. The letter contained a locket he had found in the wood by the Tsalakeechee the morning after Nelly's departure, and recognised as hers by its blue ribbon. It was a portrait of Madame Garcia. Matthew Mahon took charge of his school during his absence; but though much beloved himself, there was uproarious rejoicing among the Indian youths when the White Letter returned, the latter part of March, to resume his duties.

For two succeeding years everything went on peacefully in the village. Nelly's school flourished, and in the performance of her duties her cheek recovered its roundness and bloom, and her step the springy lightness of her early youth. Godfrey Rosenberg was often absent, but, even to Nelly, maintained a rigid silence in regard to his movements. Never, since she gave him the tablets, had he spoken of his affection for her, though he was always gentle, and his efforts to promote her happiness, in every way, were constant and untiring.

It was the evening before the first public examination in Nelly's school. Godfrey Rosenberg had returned in the evening, after an absence of seven weeks, and brought

with him a strange lady, whom he took to his residence in the lower part of the village. She was closely veiled, and, as they passed Nelly's school, he nodded to her with a happy air, but her heart sank within her, instead of leaping with joy at his coming, as it had ever done before.

She sat in the shadow of an old pecan-tree, where she had often listened while he read the beautiful legends of his country. It was so strange he did not come, she thought; he had always hitherto sought her first after his long absences. The lengthened shadows drew themselves up, as if they had no fellowship with her loneliness, and the moon ascended higher and higher, but he did not come. She returned to her room, and wept herself asleep.

The school-room was crowded next day with the villagers and white settlers from the country around. Nelly conducted the examination herself, aided by Edgar Cameron; but her heart rose to her throat and half-choked her utterance, as Godfrey Rosenberg entered with the stranger, and took the seat farthest from the stage whereon she and her scholars stood. "Surely," she thought, "he will come forward, and say one little word to me." No. He nodded to her pleasantly, but his attention was devoted to the veiled lady, though he looked at times restless and impatient.

Nelly sat at her window that afternoon, and the setting sun seemed like a mockery to her, as his glory gilded tree and roof and river. She had laid her forehead on the casement, when a sound of carriage-wheels made her look up, and she saw Godfrey Rosenberg's calèche at the gate. Her first impulse was to fly, for an indefinable dread seized her as she beheld him lift the strange lady from

the seat. But she could not retreat; and she stood in the floor, tremblingly awaiting their approach. As they entered, the lady lifted her veil, and revealed her noble features.

"Madame Garcia, my mother!" Nelly cried, and wound her arms about her neck.

"May she be your mother indeed, dear Nelly," Godfrey Rosenberg said, "she is mine already."

We ride grandly up the Mississippi on the proud Eclipse, this bright June afternoon. There are fine plantations along these coasts, but none better tended than the green fields stretching back from that noble mansion, with its sweeping galleries shaded by the feathery foliage of the Pride of China. There is no truer man than its proprietor, his sturdy Kentucky heart just mellowed enough by the softness of Southern life.

He sits in the cool shadows there, with a curly-headed urchin on his knee, while the prim matron beside him reads a letter, perhaps from Rachel and Mauvila, who, with their husbands, still dwell among the Cherokees, now removed to stranger shores; or, it may be from her sister Lucy in the dear old home, where Granny and faithful old Jake lie sleeping the long sleep at the feet of Mabel and her mother. She looks up from the letter now with a chiding shake of the head, for her husband is teaching the boy on his knee a low, mischievous whistle, in imitation of his mother's tricks when he worked in the Lily Dell fields.

There, where long ago an Indian wigwam stood, is a gray, massive building. The perfume of the Cape-jasmine blossoms comes pleasantly on the evening air from

the cultivated grounds, and the blue flowering myrtle-vine clambers in classic beauty over the marble statuary beneath the trees. Far away to the east, the level canefields stand with glistening sickles, and the hoary moss on the splendid magnolias waves in the summer wind like the fading hair of ripe old age. But there is one spot lovelier than all the rest to the lady of that lordly home—a little green hillock under a live-oak, enclosed by an iron railing, beyond the corner of the flower-garden. Years ago, when the laborers were planting the basis of the iron fence, they dug into a small mound close beside the grave. It contained an earthen vessel, hermetically sealed, which, when broken, revealed a carefully-folded, gay-colored fishing-net, identified at once by the mistress of the stately house, and cherished yet as the only memento of the Strong Arm; though the citizens of Baton Rouge still talk of a grave, gray-haired Indian occasionally seen along the shores of the silvery Amite River, whose home no one knows, and who avoids all human companionship.

The lady is standing now by the grave, leaning on the bosom of one whose heart through half her life has been her happy resting-place. The brown waves on her forehead are streaked with silver, but her serene, peaceful eyes are far brighter than when she stood by that little mound, thirty-five years ago.

The white hand of a young maiden parts the rich curtains from the brilliant oriel, that her aged grandmother may see our splendid craft; and I kiss my hand to dear Madame Garcia, while her dim eyes look earnestly through her spectacles, wondering who I am.