

*Groff Wilson*

*12. 12. 73*

MINNA MONTÉ.

BY

"STELLA."

*[Mrs Estelle A. Lewis]*

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# MINNA MONTÉ.

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## CHAPTER I.

"Oh! in that future let us think  
To hold each heart, the heart that shares,  
With them the immortal waters drink,  
And soul in soul grow deathly theirs."

BYRON.

"IT was an absurd match, and he is well punished; she has left him with a houseful of young children to watch over and care for, through sickness and health. It certainly was a preposterous affair!"

"But, mamma, it was a love-match, and brother John's poor wife is not to blame for dying; she doubtless would have remained with her family had she been consulted."

"But, Eliza, you must admit that John Monté had no right to marry a poor girl,—as he was without fortune himself,—and his children must feel that it was an act of injustice to them. It was a shameful affair! I should never have allowed *you* to marry Mr. Ruit had he not been possessed of ample means."

"You think so, mamma; but I should have teased and coaxed you until I gained my point."

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"Well, child, I trust you will always be as happy as you are now. But, my dear, we must look for clouds as well as sunshine in this life."

"Mamma, have you decided which of the children you will adopt and educate?"

"Yes. I shall send for the eldest,—your little namesake."

"I am pleased with your selection; as Mr. Ruit prefers a boy, we shall educate John."

This conversation between Mrs. Monté and her daughter occurred the evening previous to Mrs. Monté's departure for her home in the West,—she had been passing the winter at the South. On the day previous to the conversation above related, a letter had been received from Mr John Monté, informing his mother of his bereavement. This sad news caused the old lady to hasten her departure. Her son resided on a small farm in one of the Middle States. He was a man of strong will and uncontrollable temper; in childhood his mother had used every measure affection could devise, but with little success in curbing it. He had united himself when very young to a girl greatly his inferior by birth, who had nevertheless made him a good wife, and he mourned her loss most sincerely. He was a thriftless man, and there was possibly a grain of selfishness in his great grief. Under the weight of affliction, and new and heavy responsibility, which the sole charge of five helpless little ones brought on him, his health and spirits soon gave way, and he speedily followed his young wife to the grave, and the children, two sons and three daughters, were thrown upon the cold charity of the

world. They had no means of support, and were compelled to seek homes among their relatives. Friends were kind, and the orphans were speedily disposed of. John, the oldest child, went to the South as the adopted son of his Uncle Ruit. Eliza was sent for by her grandmother before her father's death, but the affectionate girl refused to go, saying, "I cannot leave dear papa and the children."

Little Minna, the beauty of the family, was standing by, and hearing Eliza's resolution, volunteered to be her substitute. "I'll go to live with grandma," she said, "and be her child." Her offer was accepted, and Minna left forever the home of her father. On that move the fate of the child turned; whether for weal or woe, we shall learn as we proceed. (Ah, fickle Fortune, how seldom art thou to be trusted!) But there is consolation in knowing that the wheel is never stationary,—if it bring weeping to-night, joy may come in the morning.

Eliza was married a few years after her father's death to a respectable young man, who supported her comfortably by his industry. They live quietly and happily in their little cottage, with children growing up around them.

George, the second son, had been apprenticed to a mechanic. He was singularly reticent and sedate, and had at an early age united himself with the Methodist Church, by this act greatly ingratiating himself with his employer, who was himself a stanch Methodist. From this time forth he was known as the "Pious child" of the family.

Louisa, the youngest of the orphans, was less com-

fortably situated than her friends desired, having been placed with her maternal aunt, an illiterate and unrefined woman, whose means were so small she was unable to have her own children educated, and it may be presumed therefore that Louisa's occupations were generally of a servile nature, not tending to elevate or refine. Let it not be supposed that we wish to convey the idea of all illiterate persons being unrefined, or that education and refinement always go hand-in-hand. Often a native refinement is visible in persons who never had any educational advantages,—probably never read a book through in their lives,—while there are others of both sexes who, though they may be highly educated, are deficient in that *suaviter in modo*, without which agreeability is impossible.

## CHAPTER II.

"Maid of my love,—sweet Genevieve,—  
In beauty's light you glide along;  
Your eye is like the star of eve,  
And sweet your voice as seraph's song."

COLERIDGE.

THERE were many striking traits of character exhibited by Minna Monté, even in early childhood. A kindness, though it proceeded from the humblest source, was gratefully received, spoken of, and thought of, until the opportunity might arrive to make a suitable return.

Ambitious of being equal, if not superior, to her companions, she often wept, and refused to take food, if a member of her class excelled her. If, on the other hand, she rose in her class, her great joy made her hysterical: but only for a moment, when she would regret her success, fearing it had caused pain to her schoolmate. By temperaments such as hers, the sufferings of life are felt with twofold keenness, as they bear not only their own trials but also those of their friends. With childlike admiration for gay frocks and brilliant ribbons, she desired them not alone for herself, but for her sisters also.

When her uncle, the messenger of her grandmother, arrived, she was highly delighted, and at once began packing her trunk, in her eagerness to leave the next



morning for her grandmother's home in a far-off State. She shed many tears, when the hour of departure at last arrived, at leaving home and its dear inmates. Her parting words were characteristic of her nature,—“Good-by, Louisa. I'll send you a pretty blue dress and a nice new ribbon for Pussie.” But so buoyant was her nature, and so desirous of pleasing her uncle, that her cheerfulness was soon restored, and her artless remarks, on persons and things, amused her uncle very much.

The country was beautiful; in places broken and precipitous, with charming valleys lying between, and all glorious in the autumn sun. In passing a large estate, Minna said,—

“Uncle, do all those fields and all those trees belong to one gentleman? If they do, he must be as rich as King Solomon. How I wish I could be his child, and live in that beautiful place, and ride every day in a fine carriage, and have plenty of dresses to wear!”

“Why, do you think of riches and covet them, child as you are, Minna?” said her uncle.

“Yes, that I do! Eliza told me papa was poor, and that I must grow up fast, and marry a rich man, and ride in my coach to see them at home; and I intend to do it.”

The remarks of children are often like shadows, portending coming events. Her sister's meaningless words made a lasting impression on Minna, of a sadly detrimental nature.

When at last they arrived safely at the end of their journey, Minna met a loving welcome from her old grandmother, who was gratified and pleased by Minna's

ready desire to accept that which Eliza had so steadily refused; she admired Eliza's unselfishness in choosing to share the poverty of the family, rather than to leave them for ease and comfort. She was quite satisfied with the exchange, and resolved that Minna should be so educated as to fit her for any position in life, however elevated, provided her mental capacity was equal to it.

For several years happiness smiled on the child in the home of her selection; her life was joyous and peaceful. Her grandmother idolized her, and warmly did Minna reciprocate every feeling of affection expressed for her by the dear old lady.

By nature Minna was not precocious; but as she advanced in years, the influence of culture, combined with her native ambition, expanded her mind far beyond mediocrity.

Her appearance when she first came to our neighborhood presents itself vividly before me at this moment. Her deep blue eyes, with their jetty fringes, beamed with joy and gladness, and were as soft as emotions from a tender heart could render them. Her cheek looked as if a rose had passed and left a gentle shade to rest there, until a word or an emotion diffused a deeper hue. In figure she was lithesome and airy, and her step so very light, that

“E'en the slight harebell raised its head,  
Elastic from her airy tread.”

Minna was always prone to laughter, and her smile, arch and irresistible, was peculiar to herself.

She had come to the South with her grandmother

to pass the winter with her relatives, who years before had adopted John. Unbidden tears filled her eyes when she saw the brother from whom she had been so long separated, as they conversed of their dear old home and their childhood's days.

### CHAPTER III.

"In songs extol to heights divine  
And every chord awake,  
Promoting still with reverence due  
The meed of friendship tried and true."

WHEN Mrs. Monté and her youthful companion arrived at Parkgate, the residence of her son-in-law, they received a cordial greeting from Mr. and Mrs. Ruit. Minna was an entire stranger to them, and at first she was shy and tremulous, but they lavished on her so much kindness and affection, that all timidity left her, and in a few weeks, by her endearing and winsome ways, she made a warm place for herself in their hearts.

How little are the under-currents of society understood by the casual looker-on! The world is more ignorant of the scheming and intriguing perpetrated in some apparently quiet households than the savans of the Academy are of the economy of animal life at the bottom of the sea.

After but a brief acquaintance, with the very reluctant consent of her grandmother, Mr. Ruit decided that he would adopt Minna.

To John this was unpleasant surprise; for he had long considered himself the heir presumptive to his uncle's estate,—consequently he felt indignant and

disinclined to brook any interference with what he was pleased to think his established rights. When informed that Minna would be educated as Mr. Ruit's daughter, his manner towards her became defiant, and he allowed no opportunity to escape to make her feel how great was the injury done him. He was by nature selfish, petulant, and ungrateful, and no amount of rigid discipline was ever sufficient to eradicate these traits. Education can accomplish a vast deal towards moulding the character, yet in this case its progress must have been impeded by hereditary defects and injudicious early training, for it seemed never to exercise a beneficial effect upon John Monté, who continued the same selfish, unlovely character to the end.

Minna's education was now the engrossing thought at Parkgate; she was a valuable addition to the household; some busybodies said, "Mr. and Mrs. Ruit made more ado about the matter than was essential." Nevertheless it afforded pleasurable occupation to the worthy couple.

"My dear," said Mr. Ruit, "I think it important now that we should find a school for Minna. She has everything to learn, and girls spring up so quickly nowadays. I wish her thoroughly instructed, and there is no time to lose."

"You have anticipated me. I am quite of your opinion. But what shall we do? We cannot send the child away from us to school,—can we?"

"By no means; I have a plan which, can it be carried into effect, will render it unnecessary to send her far from home."

"What is your plan?"

"To try our friends across the river; one more in addition to their family will cause little extra trouble."

"A most excellent idea, and I am quite certain of your success, as we all know Mr. Ruit is a prime favorite on the other side of the river."

"You flatter me."

The family to which Mr. Ruit alluded was one of wealth and refinement, and having secured a governess for their own children, they had refused always to receive any additions to their family, saying the school was strictly a private one. Mr. Ruit, however, succeeded. At his request Mrs. Temple relented in favor of Minna. On the day that he went on this mission, his return was anxiously desired. Minna sat near the window watching for him, and was the first to see him enter the gate.

"Oh, aunt," she exclaimed, "uncle is coming, and I'm sure he brings good news, for he looks pleased! Oh, I'm so glad! I won't have to be whirled off to a boarding-school, and be fed on stale bread and crackers for the benefit of my complexion!"

"What do you know of boarding-schools, child? You were never in one."

"But I do know a great deal about them, though. What fun the girls have in cheating the teachers! Ellen Brent told me how the medical students managed to send love-letters to the young ladies at the boarding-school in L——: the students got the boy at the drug-store to carry their love-letters to their sweethearts when he went to the school with prescriptions ordered by the physician who attended the young ladies. The boy had orders to put his mail-bag under

the mat of the front door as he went in, and on his return he found the answers to the letters of the previous day. If the poor boy had no letters the penalty was a sound whipping; if he had a heavy mail, his reward was a handsome present."

At this moment Mr. Ruit entered.

"I have arranged matters very satisfactorily," he said. "Minna will go over to school on Monday; I believe you were right when you said I was a favorite in that quarter. They seemed rather flattered when I made the request, and there was no hesitation in granting it."

"They are very kind, and we are very much indebted to Mrs. Temple, are we not, Minna?" said her aunt.

"Indeed we are, aunt, and I must thank uncle, too."

Her sweet face and smile thanked him more eloquently than words.

On Monday morning Minna rose with the sun, and looked as bright as a humming-bird as she flitted among the flowers, cutting a bouquet to present to the governess.

At school she soon became a great favorite with her teacher and companions, nor could it have been otherwise, so amiable and sympathizing was her disposition. She endeared herself to the little girls by helping them with their hard sums, and when those of her own class were compelled to do penance for neglect of study, she would remain with them during recess and assist them. In this way she rendered herself beloved by all, and was welcomed in the parlor as well as in the school-room.

Of all Minna's friends, Mary Temple was the best-

beloved. Their tastes were similar, and during the year that Minna attended school at Mrs. Temple's, Mary and herself had been inseparable.

After school-days were over, few things afforded Minna as much real pleasure as to be allowed to pass the day with Mary, when they would steal off to some quiet chamber and together feast on some heart-melting story or enchanting romance. The innocent young creatures soon began to fancy that there must be something very sweet in "Love's young dream." Ah, little did they imagine that love would prove as deceptive to one of them as the famed apple of the East, which is bitter on the one side and sweet on the other!

#### CHAPTER IV.

"Tell me not of joys above  
If that world can give no bliss  
Truer, happier, than the love  
Which enslaves our souls in this."

MOORE.

AS years rolled by and Minna approached womanhood, lovers naturally presented themselves as candidates for the favor of the supposed heiress, who possessed many attractions and much intrinsic worth independent of the gilded halls that might or might not be hers.

How strange and amusing are the hallucinations of persons who are under the influence of the "blind god!" Truth to say, the little urchin Cupid has divers sins to answer for. I will delineate this by relating the course pursued by an individual who succumbed to Miss Monté's charms, when she had scarcely numbered fourteen summers. This personage lived on a small estate in Mr. Ruit's neighborhood, which was, in the estimation of the owner, as valuable as a gold mine. Mr. Tape, the owner of this gold mine, had at one period of his life resided in an adjacent city, and he now desired to return there, his efforts in the agricultural line not having proved profitable. With this object in view he desired to dispose, if possible, of his valuable estate, and he flattered himself Mr. Ruit

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would be only too much delighted to purchase so charming a place, who was esteemed the nabob of the neighborhood, and who was thought to have a fancy for owning large bodies of land that he could never hope to bring under cultivation, unless his lease of life extended far beyond the allotted threescore and ten. With this business on hand, Mr. Tape made divers calls on Mr. Ruit and laid various propositions before him. It so happened that he called at Parkgate one morning before the family had breakfasted, and in the midst of a friendly remark, to the effect that he would prefer Mr. Ruit possessing the estate to any one else, and advising him to decide the matter promptly lest one of the many other applicants for the place should get it before him, breakfast was announced. Mr. Ruit found himself compelled, as it were, to invite Tape to adjourn to the breakfast-room. Of course he most cheerfully assented, as it was an unexpected honor. Miss Monté was, of course, at breakfast. Mr. Ruit was annoyed, but Mr. Tape had to be introduced to Mrs. Ruit and her niece, and though Mr. Ruit performed this act of courtesy in an *en passant* manner, the amiable Mr. Tape felt himself at liberty to commence a conversation with the ladies.

Minna, unconscious of the mischief her bright eyes were doing, was shy and silent, as she usually was in the presence of strangers. It was her assigned duty to officiate at the head of the board, in order to relieve Mrs. Ruit. Their guest had never before been in polite or refined society, though he possessed the advantage of being exceedingly well educated so far as education can be obtained from books. Unfortunately his asso-

ciations has not been very select; but from the memorable morning on which he was admitted to the breakfast-table he had continued his calls at Parkgate.

Miss Monté rarely condescended to see him, and Mrs. Ruit did so with reluctance, her gentle nature forbidding her to wound the feelings of any person. But it was a sad trial to her patience to be forced to sit for an hour listening to Tape's dull prosing, and often she was strongly tempted to be guilty of rudeness, though in her own house. Neither of the ladies were prepared for the denouement that was rapidly approaching. As they had not supposed that Mr. Tape was bereft of common sense, his visits were not thought to be prompted by a serious motive. His habit was to drop in about the hours he knew Mrs. Ruit and Miss Monté would be at tea, of which, as politeness required, he was duly invited to partake.

"Ah, madam," he exclaimed on one such occasion, "you are spoiling me; this delicious tea is spoiling me; I shall miss it dreadfully to-morrow in my lonely dwelling."

"I am pleased at your finding the tea palatable," replied Mrs. Ruit.

"It is more than palatable! Ah, madam, had I a beauteous fairy to preside over my humble board, I should not be trespassing so frequently as I now am upon your elegant hospitality."

Just at that moment a note was handed to Mrs. Ruit, which required an immediate answer, and the party adjourned to the next room. In a few minutes Mr. Tape made his bow and departed, greatly to the relief of the family, who were both wearied and pro-

voked by the frequency of his calls. It was only a few days after this tea drinking, and those complimentary speeches, that a letter was sent in to Mrs. Ruit. She was not familiar with the handwriting, but she hastily tore off the envelope, and to her amazement read as follows:

"Mr. Edward Tape has the honor to present his best respects to Madame Ruit, and most respectfully requests her to be so good as to accept the fruit in charge of the bearer of this.

"Madame Ruit will also please be amiable enough to present Mr. E. Tape's best compliments to Colonel Ruit, and his humble respects to her lovely niece, Miss Monté.

"Sunday morning."

Mrs. Ruit handed the missive to Minna, and stepped to the door to give a message to the servant to deliver to his master. On returning, she found Minna laughing.

"What is it that so amuses you, my dear, the fruit or the epistle?"

Neither, auntie," answered Minna, mischievously. "I was thinking of the pretty blossom on Mr. Tape's nose, and wondering what variety of fruit it would bear if it were to ripen."

## CHAPTER V.

"'Tis love creates their melody, and all  
This waste of music is the voice of love,  
That e'en to birds and beasts the tender arts  
Of pleasing teaches."

THOMSON.

ALL nature luxuriated in sunshine and the blessed gift of life. The birds sang in concert as they flitted from bough to bough, carrying in their bills tiny architectural gatherings. April, with her clouds and showers, had passed, leaving a legacy of flowers to smiling May. All the world enjoyed a holiday,—it was May-day! Boats were plying to and fro on the beautiful stream that meandered through the favored region in which our scene is laid.

On this delicious morning there was nothing apparently to mar the happiness of man, save his own ingratitude to the Almighty bestower of numberless mercies.

On May-day Minna breakfasted early, and crossed over to Mrs. Temple's before there was a ripple on the water; she wished to avoid the mid-day sun, and to enjoy as many hours as possible with her friend. On arriving, she ran up to Mary's private apartment, which was known in the family as "the snuggery,"—a cheerful, bright room, furnished with a girlish simplicity of taste, which gave it an air of comfort and

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refinement. The young ladies were as bright as their surroundings. After an hour or two passed, in discussing the *on dits* of the day, Minna proposed that they should resume the story of "Lalla Rookh." As Mary rose to get the book, a tap was heard at the door.

"Who is there?" she asked.

"Come and see!"

"Oh, it is you, brother Bedie,"—a pet name she had given her brother William. "What can I do for you? Minna is here; did you know it? Has mamma sent for us to go to the saloon?"

So hurriedly were the inquiries made that Willie had not a moment for thought before he replied.

"I say," repeated Mary, "Minna is with me."

"Indeed! I am delighted to hear it! When did Miss Minna arrive, and who escorted her up from the river? Ask her; but perhaps she will condescend to speak for herself."

"No, no, brother, Minna is too much in love with the 'Veiled Prophet' to hold converse with so ordinary a mortal as yourself."

"Now, Mary dear," said Minna, advancing to the door, "I am here to answer for myself, if you will allow me. Mr. Willie, I had a charming escort this morning. If you can, you may guess who it was; but pray excuse me, as I never tell tales out of school, or elsewhere."

"That is an admirable rule! All I ask is to be allowed to take the place of that happy fellow when you are returning home. Do you say yes?"

"Certainly I say yes, provided Mary will accompany us. Aunt Ruit says, 'A young lady should never go out with a beau unless there is a chaperon along of the duenna order.' Mary would perform the part admirably."

"Thank you, Miss Minna; Mary will enjoy the row on the water, and probably take an oar. I have known her do so. What say you, sister? you are always kind and obliging."

"Arrange my movements, ladies and gentlemen, to suit yourselves. We will see what I shall do when the hour comes."

"It will be all right. But do come down to the library; it is selfish to lock Miss Minna up in this warm den of yours, snug though it be, while we are enjoying a cool breeze below. And, Mary, you will be suffering to-morrow from one of those distracting attacks of headache, and then, remember, your brother will not be here much longer."

"What do you intend doing with yourself, brother? Perhaps you mean to take a plunge in the river this evening, just to see which will jump in to save you, Minna or I. I think both would. What a nice foundation that would afford for a romantic story, besides furnishing an item for the *Times*, if all three were drowned!"

"I have no such intention. I shall neither plunge, sink, nor swim, as I am not a 'Byron or a 'Leander.'"

"I repeat my inquiry, brother,—where are you going?"

"It has been decided in family conclave that I am

to enter college, to acquire all sorts of accomplishments: such, for instance, as drinking, playing cards, and smoking, beside learning to cheat those old fossils the professors."

"Well may you dub them fossils! Had I the disposal of them, they should soon be interred in Sheppey Island, where fossilized foxes and wolves are found; the professors would then rest in peace among fauna of their own species."

"I beg to be excused, sister mine, from listening to another pedantic word or speech. You are far too didactic, and too learned, to associate with a poor stupid humdrum like myself."

"You are satirical, brother Beau, so I cry *pecavi*! Allow me to make one inquiry, after that I promise to be as silent as a mummy. Are you acquainted with the accomplished young gentleman that requested a friend (who was reading aloud for the entertainment of a party of ladies) to favor him by reading *Hood's* poem, 'The Height of the Ridiculous'?"

"You little vixen! This smartness shall meet with retributive justice! Do you remember who it was that asked if 'Paul de Vere's Extracts' was an interesting book?"

"Brother, you composed that tale and charged me with it! Thank Heaven, no one believed you; it was too good to be true! Now, sir, go below, and probably we may follow, as you are so soon to leave for college. I do dislike old professors!"



## CHAPTER VI.

"Oh, Love! What is it in this world of ours  
Which makes it fatal to be loved? Ah, why  
With cypress branches hast thou wreathed thy bowers,  
And made thy best interpreter a sigh?"

BYRON.

IT was some minutes after William had descended before the two young ladies resumed their conversation. Both of them were absorbed in thought, and seemed to have forgotten the promise made him. Minna was the first to awaken from her reverie; she turned to Mary somewhat abruptly, and said,—

"Tell me, dear Mary, do you think it would be possible for you to love a person who greatly outnumbered you in years well enough to marry him?"

"Do you ask me, dear Minna, if I could love an old man? I think the inquiry scarcely deserves an answer."

"Yes, I asked if you could love an old gentleman; and now I ask, why not? Some old men are very attractive. I, for one, am partial to elderly persons."

"Well, Minna, *you* may love an old fossil, but *I* never can."

"Not if he were devoted to you?—yes, madly devoted?"

"No, never! Deliver me always from gray-headed

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lovers! But pray allow me to ask, are you threatened with an offer of marriage from an antediluvian lover? Come, out with the truth, Minna! but you need not blush so charmingly, I am not a Father Confessor."

"Please, dear Mary, be quiet; give me your promise not to mention to any one that which I desire to impart, then I will tell you something that annoys me excessively, and is too absurd to be laughed at, for it really is provoking and insulting."

"I promise, dear Minna, to guard your *secret* as inviolably as I would my own (if I had one), and I wish sincerely that I had *une petite affaire de cœur*, for I should delight in teasing my victim. But proceed with your story."

"Well, what do you think of that creature Tape's having the assurance to come almost every evening to our house? I do wish that some kind friend would baptize him in a goose-pond; repeated doses of that sort are administered to lunatics, and sometimes effect a cure. If you could see Tape mounted on that small hill near the house, his face looking like a full moon, and he peering down, noting all that passes, who are coming and who are leaving, you would mistake him for an owl."

"Darling Minna, the joke is too good to be kept! Ha! ha! If you permit me to tell brother, he will cool the gentleman's ardor for you. If it were possible, he would dip him in the Styx. I am afraid the old goose would disregard a ducking, water being a goose's natural element. Minna, I advise you to employ some one to shave his head. May I tell brother?"

"No, no, not for the world would I have you annoy

Willie! Though *I* have not an aversion to elderly gentlemen as you have, Mary, yet that creature Tape disgusts me. When thinking of him, which I seldom do, I image him with that red silk handkerchief waving around his head, as if it were a banner, and he a knight just from the battle-field. If the man's stupidity were pure, one could be amused by it; but it is so mingled with ambition that it becomes unbearable."

Having fully discussed Tape and his absurdities, they quitted the snugery, and descended, to join Mr. Temple and other members of the household, who had assembled in the grand hall, through which passed a delicious southerly breeze. With Minna this would have been a day of unclouded joy, but for the sad reflection that Willie was going away and their separation would be for an indefinite period.

Between her and her dearest friend's dearest brother there had naturally sprung up a mutual attachment, which, with all the fervor of a first engagement, they swore and believed would end only with life. The coming separation was the first interruption of their innocent happiness, and was of course regarded by both as the severest trial life could have in store. Time might produce many changes, and many events might occur to mar their happiness, before he could return from college and claim her as his own. Minna was, however, by nature buoyant, and she determined to be hopeful, and banish care with its sad forebodings.

Just as the setting sun dipped below the horizon, leaving its soft and mellow tints behind, the two young

ladies, escorted by Mr. Willie, crossed the river in a skiff. As the boat touched the shore, Willie, who was ever thoughtful of his sister's comfort, and, probably, on this occasion, somewhat mindful of self, said,—

"Mary dear, from the flush on your cheek I imagine you are not well. Say good-by to Miss Minna here, and sit quietly in the boat until I return; the ascent is steep, and you will find it fatiguing; I will see Miss Minna to the carriage and soon be with you again."

"I submit to your dictum, as I am not pressed for time. Pray do not hurry, Minna. Come again soon, dear Minna, and bring the cage with that pet owl of yours. You will have a charming drive. Give auntie a kiss for me."

"I will do so with pleasure, and I think myself entitled to a return visit on this day week, unless you intend to be a graceless and faithless friend. Miss Mary, remember your promise."

"Never doubt me, and you shall receive two visits for one after brother takes his departure. I do dread his going, and I am sure that you sympathize with me. We will miss his teasing so terribly, shall we not, dear Minna? I shall dislike old professors more than ever, and you will see the error of your ways and dislike them too. When he leaves, the sunshine will look gloomy, won't it?"

"As I am not disposed to flatter Mr. Temple, we will leave the question open until he returns from that frozen region where a cup of tea will freeze between the cup and the lip. Mary, how would you like to have him bring you a sister from the icy zone? Those Northern ladies make charming housewives. Mr.

Temple shall be good 'Mr. Van Brunt,' and the lady 'Aunt Fortune.'"

Ladies are ridiculed for their many *last* words; few things, in a small way, are more annoying to the looker-on than those lingering adieus.

When the last word had really been said, the youth offered his arm to Minna, and they then mounted the river-bank. For some minutes not a word was uttered. At last Willie broke the silence by saying,—

"Minna, we are about to part, not to meet again for a long time. What effect will absence have on you? You will soon be a grown young lady and forget the boy lover, whose thoughts, whose heart and soul, are yours unchangeably."

"Do you suppose that I can be so false, so ungrateful, as to forget you? I do not believe that you are so unjust. I never forget; 'tis my nature to remember. Why, then, should you be exiled? You never will be while memory lasts."

"A thousand thanks and blessings for those words! Be assured that I am yours in life and in eternity. If fate separates us, I will be true to you; you are the star of my destiny. If it were possible to annihilate time, how gladly would I blot out the next two dreary years of absence! The very thought is maddening! Will you sometimes think of this twilight hour when I am far away? Speak, dearest!"

For a moment she did not reply; then, sighing deeply, she said,—

"You know well, dear Willie, that I shall remember it, and that I will think of you and mourn your absence. Most deeply do I regret this, as I trust,

temporary separation. Life is very fitful, but we must be hopeful. If time permitted, I would unfold to you every feeling of my heart, whose love is now and will forever be yours. Early impressions last."

"All that I ask is your promise that this hand, which I now hold, shall never be another's, and that you will be my bride in three years from this day. This promise once made, I shall be contented, and will shake off all evil foreboding."

"Do not press me, dear Willie, to bind myself by a promise, but be satisfied with the assurance that my heart is yours. You know the peculiar situation in which I am placed. I try to conquer the feeling, but my soul revolts when I recollect that I am only a pensioner on the bounty of my uncle and aunt. The truth is, I fear my uncle more than I love him; while he is kind and liberal, he is at the same time eccentric and tyrannical. I now say to you, dear Willie, what my lips should utter to no other mortal. The orphan's heart is barred by an icy barrier, which only thaws at the tender touch of true love. Encourage and counsel me, dear friend."

"Your revelation greatly astonishes me. My impression was that your happiness at Parkgate was unalloyed. Mr. Ruit is reputed an exceedingly amiable man in his domestic circle. Follow the dictates of your heart, and you will never err, unless it be from an excess of amiability."

"Pray do not flatter me. In following my own selfish wishes I should commit many sad errors, to be bitterly repented of when too late. By this outpouring of my feelings to you, in whom I place implicit

confidence, my heart feels great relief; but I at the same time despise myself for being so ungrateful to my benefactors. I feel sad at heart."

"If you are sad, love, I am miserable! I do beseech you, throw off this gloom." Try to be cheerful and patient until I return from college; if you succeed, then these trials will have passed as a dream of youth, and serve only to be laughed at."

As they had reached the carriage, there was no more time for loitering or further expression of sentiment. With a warm pressure of the hand, he placed her in the carriage, and they parted. Sad were those young and guileless hearts, that were beating so entirely in unison.

Willie, with a quick step, hurried back to join his patient sister. She greeted him with a smile, and remarked,—

"You must be weary: you had quite a long walk. I presume you drove home with Minna and walked back, did you not?"

"Have I been absent very long? I was not aware, dear sister, that I had loitered more than a few minutes to bid Miss Minna adieu, as I should not see her again before I depart for the North. I am sorry to have detained you, if your engagements are pressing, or if you grew weary of your own thoughts."

"Oh, no; I have no engagements of any description, and am too great an egotist ever to become weary of my own thoughts. I only feared that *you* probably were fatigued."

While the skiff was skimming the waves, both Mary and her brother were silent, and absorbed,

seemingly, in watching the young moonbeams, as they silvered the ripples made on the water by the oar that was skillfully plied by a favorite old servant; he was a privileged character, and spoke unreservedly to "young massa" and "young missus."

"Mas' Willie, Miss Minny has lobely eyes; dey is blue jis like the hebbins, and dey looks for sartin jis like we war gwine to hab some rain dis bery evening. Ha, ha! dis ole feller nose somefing, ha, ha!"

His laughter was so hearty, and so infectious, that Mary and Willie forgot their sad thoughts and joined in, greatly to the delight of old "Bill."

## CHAPTER VII.

"If love be folly, as the schools would prove,  
The man must lose his wits who falls in love;  
Deny him love, you doom the wretch to death,  
And then, it follows, he must lose his breath."

MINNA waved a parting adieu with her hand, in return for one from her friend's hat, just before he passed out of sight; she then desired the coachman to hasten home. She dreaded encountering Tape on the road, as it was about his hour for returning home from the cabaret. She barely escaped the infliction, as it was scarcely five minutes after she got within-doors when Mr. Tape was seen coming on foot down the avenue, leading his Rosinante by the bridle; his visage looked as rubicund and as shining as the glowing grape could make it.

"Auntie," said Minna, "please order Owen not to admit that man. If he comes in, I shall vanish! I am sick,—my head aches!"

Her request could not be complied with, as Mr. Tape was at that moment ushered in by the servant, who had not received orders to the contrary, and he knew well that visitors ever received a kindly welcome from his mistress. The knight of the red banner entered, as he usually did, with a flourishing salaam.

"Good-evening, Madame Ruit. I flatter myself that

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I have the honor to find Madame and Colonel Ruit and their lovely niece in the enjoyment of a sanitary state of health."

"Thank you, sir; we are all quite well except Minna, who——"

"Miss Minna! is she sick? Oh, heavens! is she ill,—is she very ill? What is it? Is she suffering pain? Allow me to fly and get the 'Balm of Gilead.'"

"Give yourself no trouble, sir; my niece has a slight headache, which is not unusual with her; she needs no remedies other than those that are in the house."

"Pardon me, madam, I intended no intrusion, but was overcome by the intensity of my feelings at the bare idea of Miss Monté's suffering a moment's pain. I am fully alive to the fact that you have here everything that mortal could desire to charm the eye and to alleviate mental or physical suffering. I again ask pardon."

A stately bow was the only reply made to this *flattering* speech; then, having entirely exhausted his vocabulary, he rose to depart, secretly hoping that he would be invited to remain to tea; but on this evening the customary invitation was omitted.

To Mr. Tape's repeated requests to be most respectfully remembered to Colonel Ruit, and that his humble compliments might be delivered to Miss Monté, he received a cold "thank you, sir," from Mrs. Ruit. He then bowed himself out.

On the following day, when Mrs. Ruit and her niece were cosily seated, with books and work scattered around them, a basket of peaches and a letter were brought in. The address was in Tape's handwriting.

The man's audacity was amusing and provoking; but when Mrs. Ruit tore off the envelope and read the missive, every other feeling gave way to her keen sense of the ridiculous. The basket was sent back with a verbal message expressive of thanks. Minna, on seeing how greatly amused her aunt was, seized the document and read it aloud:

"(Private.)

"TO MADAME COLONEL RUIT,

"With a basket of peaches.

"Mr. Edward Tape has the honor to present his best respects to Madame Ruit, and solicits her acceptance of the basket of peaches sent in charge of the bearer of this. Mr. Tape would fain suggest the propriety of the fruits not being eaten raw, inasmuch as the doctors (I allude to the M.D.'s), in consequence of cholera, appear to be unanimous in forbidding the eating of raw fruits, except figs, and those are not to be had.

"Mr. E. T. begs leave to throw himself on Mrs. Ruit's amiable indulgence for forgiveness if he hereafter makes his visits, 'like angels' visits, few and far between.' It is a course which he is reluctantly compelled to adopt, and he frankly states that it is in consequence of her lovely niece's having—unconsciously, doubtless—given rise to a sentiment, *i.e.* love, which he has neither the fatuity nor presumption to entertain the most forlorn hope she reciprocates towards so humble a worm of the dust as Mr. E. T. He therefore thinks the best way to kill off the passion, if it be possible, which is very doubtful, is to see the object of his adoration as rarely as possible.

"Mr. E. T. begs that this remains a secret between Madame Ruit and E. T."

Mrs. Ruit and Minna were still laughing over this unique epistle when Mr. Ruit entered. Minna turned to him and said,—

"Look here, uncle, what think you of this? A love-letter to a child of fourteen!"

Mr. Ruit read the document with numberless exclamations. When he had finished reading, he remarked,—

"Well, Minna, *I* can tell you a secret too. If he is mad, there is method in his madness, for I have learned that this fellow has the habit of calling at Mr. Berry's on those days that he absents himself from here. Whether it be Mrs. Berry's nice tea or her nice daughter's bright smiles that attract him, I shall leave for you to decide, as you are the person most interested."

"Indeed, uncle, I am not in the least degree interested."

"Whether you *are* or are *not* interested," replied Mr. Ruit, "I desire that Mr. Tape shall in future be denied admittance within these doors. But for the fear of giving notoriety to the ridiculous affair, I should give Tape a taste of my rattan, in lieu of the 'delicious beverage' of which Mrs. Ruit has been so absurdly lavish. As the case is so peculiar, we will treat it with silent contempt."

"If," said Mrs. Ruit, "we could save the creature from 'fits,' in keeping him from the cabaret, our cups would be profitably bestowed."

## CHAPTER VIII.

"When forced the fair nymph to forego,  
What anguish I felt at my heart!  
Yet, I thought but it might not be so—  
'Twas with pain that she saw me depart."

SHENSTONE.

MR. TAPE had made repeated calls, and attempts to regain his footing at Parkgate. The invariable answer received, when he knocked at the door and asked to see the ladies, was, "The ladies are engaged, and beg to be excused." Mrs. Ruit was conscientious herself, and never could draw a distinction between fibbing and lying; therefore she would not allow Owen to say, "The ladies are out." *This* among fashionables would have been ridiculed and called prudery; but *that* gave her no concern, for Mrs. Ruit was as firm in her principles as Mr. Ruit in his prejudices. That gentleman had ordered his doors to be closed on Tape, and no one dared transgress his orders when he had once thoroughly circulated them.

How often it occurs that gentlemen who are soft, winning, and perfectly delightful in their intercourse with the outside world, are rough and tyrannical at home, and the poor wife is too often the chief sufferer!

The summer had been intensely warm, but it had passed, and delicious autumn had come to cheer those who had suffered from too much sunshine.

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The change was hailed with a feeling of relief by the ladies at Parkgate, for they had wearied of the heated term.

The fine weather often seduced Minna from her books and indoor occupations to ramble amid the pleasure-grounds. She would roam from tree to tree for hours, luxuriating on pleasant memories, and, in fancy, drawing pictures of future happiness too dazzling ever to be realized. William Temple was the sun that would illumine or shadow her path; to him her thoughts were ever turning.

Minna from childhood had indulged too much in romance; her dream of bliss might be realized, but it would come, like a cap on the sea, not to rest, but to pass. It often occurred that Tape was the ghoul who broke the golden thread of her pleasant reverie. It was his habit to ride by, about the hour that he supposed Minna would be in the grounds; if he saw her, he secreted himself and his horse behind one of the large stone pillars of the gate; he aimed to effect this manœuvre without being seen by her, for he knew she would make a hasty retreat if she saw him approaching.

This state of things was known to Mrs. Ruit, and was a source of vexation to her, as well as to her niece, but they prudently concluded not to inform Mr. Ruit, lest he should give way to passion, and commit a deed by which a farce might be changed to a tragedy. Why is it that all ladies do not act thus wisely? Patience is a rare virtue; when nurtured, it ever brings a recompense.

On a morning subsequent to one of those hasty retreats from the lawn, a package was left at the door by an unknown servant, who retired immediately. The package contained two letters, one for each of the ladies.

"Surely," said Mrs. Ruit, "the creature has the itch of writing."

"Aunt," said Minna, "please read your letter aloud. I am sure it is spicy." Mrs. Ruit complied.

"TO MADAME RUIT:

"DEAR MADAME,—Please be so kind as to excuse the liberty I take in handing you, under cover of this, a note I make bold to address to Miss Monté, impelled by the almost uncontrollable sentiment she has inspired me with.

"I have purposely left the letter unsealed, that it may pass through the crucible of your censorship, a supervision, if I am correctly informed, a mother, or her representative, has a right to exercise, when notes of the description of the inclosed are addressed to their daughters or nieces, which, though not in the English vernacular, I know full well you understand perfectly that in which it is written.

"If, after perusal, you deem it proper to allow it to go to its destination, be good enough to pass it over. In the contrary case, please be so kind as return it to me under envelope, without comment, and, upon my word as a gentleman, I will hereafter forever keep my peace in reference to Miss Monté, reserving to myself the privilege, should chance throw me in contact with her, to observe towards her that marked respect it is

the duty of every well-bred gentleman to deport himself with towards a lady.

"I would much have preferred doing all this in person; but, under the uncertainty of knowing whether I have not the misfortune to labor not only under Miss Monté's but your own displeasure in acting so imprudently in sending her that little song,\* which I had had the audacity to dedicate to her; I tried to make the *amende honorable* in my note to Col. Ruit on the subject. Nevertheless, I fear that I laid myself open to the charge of forwardness, a reputation I would sooner suffer any martyrdom than acquire.

"Having been élève according to the French code of etiquette, it is possible I may have sorely sinned against the rules laid down in the American code. At any rate, madam, apologizing for the boldness of the step, I throw myself on your kind indulgence for forgiveness, almost assured, as I am, that it will prove fruitless. Should, contrary, I am free to confess, to my expectations, Miss Monté's decision be favorable, it will be for you and Col. Ruit to determine whether you think me worthy of confiding her happiness to me, in granting me your consent that I make her my wife.

"I will, in a few days, send my servant for a reply; and, with considerations of the highest esteem, I will, with your permission, subscribe myself,

"Yours, most respectfully,

"E. TAPE."

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\* "She loves another," page 41.



"Now, dear aunty, do me the favor to read the note addressed to me. I would not take hold of it with my scissors, unless it were to hold it to a lighted match."

"My dear, that is exactly what Mr. Tape wishes to hold you to. A *match* is the desire of his heart. Well, let us see what he says to Miss Monté."

"Oh, aunty, you are such a teaser!"

"TO MISS MONTÉ:

"MY DEAR MISS MINNA,—'To be, or not to be—ay, there's the rub,' is a phrase to be found in one of Shakespeare's plays,—Hamlet, I believe. Will you allow me to substitute a word in lieu of *be*, and write, 'To love, or not to love—ay, there's the rub!' Now, dear Miss Minna, I do love, and I love dearly, tenderly, ardently, passionately,—in short, I love one sweet little being as much as man can love a woman! Can you not guess who that being is? You can, I know; but you are such a little tyrant you will not, and hence I must *execute* myself, and tell it! It is altogether too interesting a little lady, who rejoices under the name of Miss Minna Monté! Are you offended at my audacity? Can you find charity enough in that little heart of yours to forgive me?"

"Do you know, Miss Minna, that I have had the fatuity to think you are not altogether indifferent to me; but, oh! that doubt, what a racking torture! Can you not devise some means of conveying such an assurance to me without compromising yourself? If it be possible, let me know that I am at liberty to lay my case before your excellent uncle and your dear aunt, and solicit their consent to make me the happiest man

living, in giving their assent to the future union of our destinies.

"I make no apology for my boldness in thus making known the sentiments with which you have, very inadvertently, doubtless, inspired me. Whether I am, or am not, under a mistake with regard to your feelings towards me, believe me, dear Miss Minna, I would not for the world be guilty of any impropriety towards you; far from it! I throw myself on your amiable generosity for forgiveness, being urged on by a sentiment the most powerful which can agitate a man's breast, and which, for the present, exercises imperial slavery over me.

"Allow me, adorable Miss Minna, with considerations of the most profound esteem and devotion, to subscribe myself,

"Ever faithfully, your lover,

"E. T."

Mrs. Ruit, without comment, refolded these specimens of Mr. Tape's penmanship, and placed them in an envelope to be in readiness for his Mercury.

#### SHE LOVES ANOTHER.

A SONG.

Dedicated to Miss Minna Monté, by EDWARD TAPE.

I.

"She loves another, she told me so;  
Then the cup of woe did overflow;  
She spurned me with a queenly air,  
As I knelt in mad, in wild despair.

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## II.

"She loves another, and, thus repelled,  
In firmer chains by love I am held;  
Ah, might I claim a lover's power,  
Of fate I'd ask no other dower.

## III.

"She loves another, and, though as lorn  
As Eden ere young Love was born,  
Ne'er again will I crave a heart  
So false, and so imbued with art.

## IV.

"She loves another, and hope has fled,  
And withering care has bleached this head;  
Nor time nor sorrow the heart can chill;  
To love her yet it must and will."

## CHAPTER IX.

"She knew she was by him beloved--she knew,  
For quickly comes such knowledge, that his heart  
Was darken'd with her shadow, and she knew  
That he was wretched."

BYRON.

A YEAR had now elapsed since William Temple left home to enter upon his collegiate course at Harvard. He wished to return on a visit at the termination of the first term; but Mr. Temple decided otherwise, thinking it would be greatly to the advantage of his son to remain in the North, employ a tutor, and pass the vacation in traveling through New England. Ambitious that his son should adopt some literary profession, and fearing that once more with the loved ones of home it would be difficult to induce him to return to college, he thought it best that William should graduate before leaving the North. This decision was a heart-rending stroke to the youthful lovers. Minna felt it even more keenly than William did. A thousand vague fancies and fears floated through her brain. Her first thought was, "that the Temple family had discovered his partiality for her, were displeased, and designed to prevent the marriage by keeping Willie away, with the hope, probably, that he would meet with a Northern lady and form a more desirable alliance."

William Temple's feelings were the reverse of Minna's; he never for a moment supposed that there would be opposition on the part of his family to his marriage. On the contrary, he thought it would afford them infinite pleasure to see him united to one so calculated to render him happy. The true state of the case was this: Mr. Temple knew that Willie was very gallant and fond of the society of ladies, but never dreamed of his having a fancy for Minna. Had it been spoken of in his presence, he would have been amused, and have forgotten it the next moment.

Mary Temple had long felt a sisterly regard for Minna, and, being the confidante of the youthful lovers, was made the medium of communication between them. Many messages and one brief note had been conveyed by her to Minna. This missive afforded intense pleasure to the receiver, as she felt and believed that every written word came as an echo from the warm heart of her beloved and devoted Willie.

John Monté was at this time making a short visit to Parkgate, the first since he had engaged in business. His moroseness towards his sister, which seemed to have intensified during his absence, was singularly displayed on the morning fixed upon for his departure to his place of business, seeming positively wild with passion, which he exhibited in remarkable ways. Minna timidly requested him to inform her in what she had offended or wounded him. His only response to her inquiry was a cruel pinch of the ear; after which he rushed to the front door to make his escape. Fortunately, or unfortunately, as the sequel may show, Mr. Ruit had seen him, through a glass door, as he was

committing the outrage, and was ready, when John passed out, to kick him down the steps. This achieved, he found breath to say, "Quit this house, miscreant, now and forever!" Minna, distressed at the occurrence, and doubly so at Mr. Ruit's having witnessed it, woman-like, found relief in tears. Mr. Ruit, on entering and finding her weeping so bitterly, endeavored to console her by saying,—

"I have long been aware of John's unworthiness, and this knowledge has so totally changed my feelings towards him that I have only awaited such an occasion as the one that had just offered to dismiss John from my doors, and from further dependence upon those who for years regarded him in the light of a son."

It was only a week after John's hasty departure that Minna most unexpectedly discovered a clue by which his conduct was fully explained; and it caused her increased regret at his dismissal. She was passing the day with Mary Temple in her snuggery, enjoying school-day reminiscences, when Minna, in taking a piece of embroidery from a work-box, spied an envelope addressed in John's handwriting to Miss Mary Temple.

"Why, Mary," she exclaimed, "when did this come?" at the same moment seizing the letter.

Mary's cheek was quickly suffused with blushes.

"Please, Minna," she said, "return me that letter, and ask no questions. Do you not perceive that it is marked 'private'?"

"Private or public, see it I will!" And Minna tore off the cover and unfolded the letter. Mary besought her not to read it. Finding her prayers were unheeded, she said,—

"Well, dear Minna, if you will read it, I cannot prevent you; but, remember, it is not with my consent that you do so. I assure you, the contents surprised me as much as they will you, for I had never dreamed that your brother had any preference for me, and the idea of his offering himself had not for a moment been thought of."

Minna read the letter aloud:

"DEAR MISS MARY,—I have at last reached my resting-place,—and a great place it is! Yes, a great place it is! But I shall not remain here very long. I have seen some very pretty girls, and there is one in the bunch that cannot be surpassed in beauty except by six. She is almost as smart as she is sweet, and she is as sweet as the days are long. This is *some* recommendation; but her 'tin' is greater in my estimation; for what is love when minus *tin*? I certainly would make a business of falling in love with her, but that I am a mile deep in love with a certain lady that I left behind me. It is not difficult, Miss Mary, for you to guess who that is. I fell in on the road with a Miss F—— and a Miss D——: both were very agreeable, and Miss F—— was quite fond of *taking a glass*. (I don't mean a mirror.) She positively took three in one evening with a gentleman who joined our party and who was well supplied with refreshing beverages. I assure you, we had some fun that evening; though it was not inspired, on my part, by gin-and-water, for I never intend to acquire that abominable habit of imbibing liquors some fellows believe in.

"I hope to be at Parkgate for a few days in the fall,

provided you answer this, and say, 'Come.' If you do not, I will cut off my head, or that of some other person, for I shall be utterly desolate and worse than indifferent to life. What is life when wanting love?

"Ah, dear Miss Mary, because I write thus you must not suppose that I am not *devoted* to you, for I am all that and much more, if more were possible! Your image impressed itself upon this heart when it was as flexible as wax. Now, 'tis tough and hard as a fossil, yet I cannot tear out your image; neither do I wish to do so, unless you should say, 'No, never!' Pray keep this letter from Minna's prying eyes; she has done me mischief enough already, without setting you against me!

"Adieu. Ever thine,

"J. M.

"P.S.—I shall return sooner than I expected: so please reserve your answer until we meet face to face.

"J."

When Minna had read the letter, she turned to her friend and said, "Tell me, dear Mary, did you give the answer on the evening before my brother left, when he was last at home? I remember hearing him tell auntie that he was going over to say good-by to Mrs. Temple."

"Yes, he came on that evening for his answer; but there was no opportunity for a private interview, as sister Caroline's *fiancé* was making her a call, and he, being a grand seignior (in his own estimation), had the parlor to himself, therefore we small people had

to sit with the family in the hall: we would not have dared to interfere with his lordship's wooing. I would they were married and off, for his airs and graces are unpleasant to me! When I saw John approaching from the window, I ran to my desk, noted a few words, and inclosed the paper in an envelope. As he was leaving, I put it in his hand, and whispered, 'God bless you, John!'

"Ah," said Minna, "that accounts for his violence to me when he returned to Parkgate."

## CHAPTER X.

"If thou wishest to be wise,  
Keep these words before thine eyes:  
What thou speakest, and how, beware,  
Of whom, to whom, when, and where."

A WEEK had elapsed from the time that Minna made the discovery of John's attachment for her friend, and Mary Temple had come to pass the day at Parkgate. When the news of the neighborhood had been discussed in a wild school-girl fashion, Minna turned abruptly to Mary and said, "Pray what did you mean when you told me that Mr. Renarde considered himself a grand seignior?"

"I meant precisely what I said, for he really has a profound respect for himself. Why, Minna, where are your ears? do you seal them up as good Christians sometimes seal up their lips in order to imprison the *unruly member*?"

"Do not trouble yourself about my ears, or lips either, Miss Mary. They are open now; so proceed, and throw light upon my darkness."

"It is truly strange that you should never have heard of the ruse that Mr. Renarde and his relatives resorted to in order to win poor, dear, proud sister Caroline. It was as smart as it was cunning; it was amusing, too, and I feel inclined to scream when I

think of it. Minna, do you think that a gentleman could pique you into a marriage, the very thought of which had at one time been excessively repugnant to your feelings?"

"It is a difficult question to answer. We read of very unnatural events in romance, yet, from my limited knowledge of life and its realities, I do believe that every-day occurrences are much more astonishing than imaginary histories. At times, dear Mary, I am beset by awful forebodings with regard to my own fate. I fancy that a veiled prophet will rise up in my path; then I feel like Zelica,—

Lorn as the hung-up lute that ne'er hath spoken  
Since the sad day its master-cord was broken.

Pardon me, dear, for entertaining you with such nonsensical egotism. Please proceed with the story of the grand seignior."

"Well, as I before remarked, it is very singular that the story should be new to you. It is just this: sister Caroline flirted with William Renarde (as she did with every new acquaintance) until he ceased to afford her amusement; from that moment she began to be distant in her manners towards him, and, finally, turned the cold shoulder upon him, whereupon my lord, as I suppose, held a family council, and it was decided that he *should* marry Caroline Temple, and the way to manage the affair, and bring the fastidious lady to her senses, was through *pique*. They knew sister Caroline had too much sense to be influenced by flattery, they also knew her to be a lady of unbounded pride and overweening self-appreciation, consequently pique

was the weapon most likely to effect their purpose. The first move in the game was for Mr. Renarde to stop his visits, and to assume an air of great gayety and buoyancy; when his friend, Mr. Plump, accosted him jocundly with, 'So, old fellow, you have kissed the mitten; am sorry for you,'—(this was related to us by an eye-witness),—Mr. Renarde replied, 'That's a good joke; believe it if you will.' Then, with a significant shrug and a wink, would walk off,—leaving his brother to speak openly, which he did on every opportunity that offered.

"One day a gentleman expressed astonishment at Miss Temple's having refused so handsome a man as Mr. Renarde,—to say nothing about his sterling qualities.

"Do you think, sir, that Caroline Temple would have been so silly as to have refused my brother? She had sense enough to know that he never had an idea beyond the amusement of the hour. Believe me, sir, Miss Temple had no hope of the kind. It is true that she tried to ensnare W. Picton Renarde when she first made his acquaintance, but speedily saw it was useless. Therefore, like a sensible woman, abandoned the thought.

"Picton's relatives have higher aspirations for him. They seek a lady of distinction and fortune for *their* idol. In fact, he must marry among his peers. I do not uphold them in idolizing Picton. Yet it must be acknowledged that *he* has a right to look high when seeking a companion for life upon whom he would confer the honor of bearing our name. Caroline Temple can only boast of her fine person and her beautiful face. 'Tis true she has a few thousands.'

"A few thousands, say you?" remarked his listener. 'We are under the impression that the lady numbers some scores of thousands.'

"Grant, sir, that you are correctly informed. What would that amount avail in the hands of a young gentleman of refined habits and elegant tastes? Then we are to remember, sir, the privations and the losses a fellow has to submit to when he assumes the yoke matrimonial.'

"A gentleman has 'losses' to submit to! I do not comprehend you. I had supposed that a man gained a boon of inestimable value in becoming possessed of a wife, provided he made a judicious selection.'

"That sounds well enough in a romance, but the days of knight-errantry are numbered with the past. In my opinion, a man gains an immensity of trouble and vexation when he marries, and makes a horrible loss of liberty.'

"Well, sir, with such views, *you* should never marry.'

"I quote, dear Minna, as you are aware, from memory; yet I think this is a correct version of the affair. The impression made on my mind was deep and lasting when it was communicated to me by Miss Clatter. She dives to the bottom of everything, and never brings up platitudes; or she thinks so, and delights in enlightening the ignorant. What should we do without her?"

"Pray continue your narrative. My ears are open now, dear Mary, and I wish to hear more of his lordship."

"I am nearly through. Those scathing remarks

that I have quoted were repeated to sister Caroline. The dart struck deep, and the ruse was pre-eminently successful. The Renarde family were as wise as serpents and as cunning as foxes. I wonder if, according to the law of progress, their great-great-grandfather was not of the genus *vulpes* instead of the ape, from whom other mortals are supposed to have descended. To end too long a story, I will only say that Mr. Renarde and sister Caroline met most unexpectedly (of course) at a wedding,—he was best man and she was first bridesmaid. There had been a new arrangement made by the bride. She directed that the young ladies should draw, and so should the gentlemen. The lady who drew No. 1 should be the partner of gentleman No. 1. Here was a dilemma: Miss Temple and Mr. Renarde were not on speaking terms. What was to be done? Nothing but to let 'by-gones be by-gones' and meet as acquaintances, or to excite observation and ill-natured remarks. In two months from that eventful evening Miss C. Temple and William Picton Renarde were engaged to be married. You know the rest."

"Many thanks, dear Mary, for this interesting story; we juveniles should profit by the experience of our seniors; but we will not. I know if I were once betrothed, I'd be as faithful as the nightingale is to his sultana, the rose, however violent might be the objection of my friends to my selection."

"Now, Miss Monté, excuse me; but the truth is, you have read too many romances, and they have turned your head. You imagine that you would be constant under all trials and tortures, whereas in

years to come you may be induced, by the power of circumstances, to pursue a course adverse to the one now mapped in your mind. Take my advice, child, and read *Æsop's Fables* or *Miss Leslie's books*."

"Your advice is most excellent. When did you arrive in America, Miss Hannah More? I thought you were dead, ma'am. Did you leave all well at Barley Wood? I hope so, madam. And I hope, Miss Mary, you will find some masculine worthy of playing 'Cœlebs' to your 'Lucilla.'"

"Pardon me, Miss Monté, but I cannot listen to more pedantry this evening. It is late, and I am compelled to say good-by. Shall expect you next week."

"Certainly, and with Miss Leslie's 'Behavior Book' or the 'Vicar of Wakefield' under my arm."

Just at the moment of parting, Mary handed Minna a note from William, to whom they had not alluded during the day. The precious document was silently received and secreted in her pocket; the perusal was reserved for the quiet of her own apartment, when there would be no eye to witness her emotion. Greatly to the distress of these young ladies; they were soon to part for an indefinite period. Mrs. Temple intended sending her daughter to New England to complete her education, and, at the same time, to invigorate her constitution, which was by nature delicate. The trial of leaving home was greatly softened to Mary by the prospect of seeing her dearly loved brother, under whose fostering care she felt that she would be happy,—yet she much dreaded the moment for her departure, which was fast approaching.

Minna accompanied her friend to the river, and saw her safe under "Uncle Bill's" charge; she then returned to the house, and hastened to her chamber, locked out intruders, and tore off the envelope from the precious missive that she had been longing to read. It contained only a few brief lines, but those were thrilling, because she felt that they were truthful, and warm from her lover's ardent heart.

"DEAREST MINNA,—Words are not strong enough to express what my soul should say; but you know at this moment, as well as you will when these words are penned and laid before you, that every pulse, every throb of this heart, beats for you, and for you alone. Time can make no change in me, and I entreat you, dearest, to remember our parting on the river-bank on that sad evening. The moonlight seemed dark, but the shadow was over my soul.

"At twilight my thoughts ever turn to thee."

"Now and forever your own

"W."



## CHAPTER XI.

"Dearly bought the hidden treasure,  
Finer feelings can bestow;  
Chords that vibrate sweetest pleasure  
Thrill the deepest notes of woe."

BURNS.

THE parting was over, and Mary Temple had gone to pass a year, perhaps more, at school in New England, to put the finishing stroke to the structure, the foundation of which had been laid by Madame Affolé and others. Minna's ambition was excited, and she resolved, if possible, to keep pace in improvement with her friend. The best teachers the country afforded were procured for her; and she also received instruction in astronomy from Mr. Ruit, who, notwithstanding his devotion to drawing and out-door amusements, found leisure enough, and possibly too much, for the pleasing task of instructing his niece. At this period there were no events in the Ruit family worthy of being chronicled, except that Mrs. Ruit's health was slowly but steadily declining. The climate was telling upon her naturally fragile frame, and her mind was far from being in a tranquil condition. A shadow had been for months creeping over her heart, and it began to assume the shape of a hideous skeleton. She felt that her husband was estranged from her, and that

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less congeniality existed between them than formerly. *She* by nature was social and *genial*; *this* he had never been, not even in the days of their early married life.

Mrs. Ruit, prior to her marriage, had been the pet and idol of her mother; she naturally looked for as much, yes, more tenderness from her husband, but in this expectation she had been disappointed. As time rolled on he became, day by day, less demonstrative of affection, and was more and more gloomy and wrapped up within himself. In his own house Mr. Ruit rarely emerged from the library. When visitors were calling, if a member of the family sought him there, he was usually found with a volume on some abstruse science in his hand. Mrs. Ruit sometimes fancied that John Monté's ingratitude and ill conduct weighed heavily upon her husband, and rendered him cynical. She had reason for this belief, for his anathemas on "hypocrites and ungrateful wretches" were both loud and deep; but *few* could comprehend him, and his wife was utterly incapable of following the tortuous windings of his misguided heart. While he would recline upon a sofa, with a book in his hand, deeply interested, as she supposed, his thoughts were wandering to things quite foreign to those around him, or to the science that he pretended to be studying. Mr. Ruit liked persons to think that his rôle in life was that of philosopher, student, and a diver into the mysteries of nature, and he endeavored to persuade himself that he totally disregarded the luxuries of life. Mr. Ruit thoroughly detested what he termed *cant*, and what others would style piety,—for his mother-in-law he entertained a positive aversion, as she would at

times venture to address to him a homily, whereupon he would deliver a Jeremiad upon hypocrisy, and gladly avail himself of the opportunity to taunt her with her Methodism. One day, on hearing her say "she wished to purchase a pair of spectacles set in gold," he asked, "Do you think the golden rims will make the road to heaven more distinct than if seen through steel ones such as you now wear?" On another occasion, the old lady happened to say to Mrs. Ruit, in his presence, "Eliza, I think you require a new carriage." He replied, "Ah, yes, a new carriage to drive to the 'Golden Gates.' Why not take wing?—that would be the swiftest way of reaching the Holy Land."

These bitter remarks were distasteful to Mrs. Ruit; as she communed with herself, her thoughts ran thus: "Ah, how changed he is! Well do I remember the time when mamma made her first visit to us; he was then affectionate to her and devoted to me. He only wished for gold in order to lay it at my feet, that I might give it away, or spend it according to my inclination. I fear that his prejudice against my mother is so great he may in time become indifferent towards me. Heaven forbid, as, under such circumstances, I could not live,—life would be a burden. Possibly I do not exert myself to please him as I did in our early married life. Wives often have themselves to blame in cases of estrangement; knowing this, I shall commence anew from this day, and endeavor to win him back."

## CHAPTER XII.

"'Tis Love that murmurs in my breast,  
And makes me shed the secret tear;  
Nor day nor night my soul hath rest,  
For night and day her voice I hear."

ANON.

IT might have been supposed that Mr. Tape considered his a lost cause, as he had made no demonstrations since the day on which his missives were inclosed to him "without comment." It is true that he had not ventured to inflict either his presence or his presents upon the ladies at Parkgate, yet he had been watchful and faithful in making daily reconnoissances from his porch of all that was passing,—who were going and who coming. Notwithstanding the many rebuffs bestowed upon him, the man's self-appreciation was so great, he was unable to divest himself of the firm conviction that Miss Minna entertained a secret prepossession in his favor which she feared to avow, lest her wishes might not be approved and sanctioned by her uncle and aunt. "I knew a case some years back," argued Tape with himself, "quite similar to *ours*: a young lady and a young gentleman were attached and privately engaged; *she* objected to her lover's speaking to her mother, for the reason that she believed there would be opposition

made by her parents to the marriage. Her father happened to be absent from home for some months; in fact, during the whole time that this love-affair was in progress. As the hour approached when he was expected to return, the lovers held a consultation, and by mutual agreement they decided that their plan was to take the dilemma by the horns, and to fix their fate irrevocably by running away and getting married before the permission of her parents had been asked or refused. That was what I call moral courage," argued Tape; "but I have to confess that retribution followed, as it ever does, and that the couple repented bitterly of the false step they so needlessly took."

Here ended Mr. Tape's review. It was impossible, as we before remarked, for that individual to believe that Miss Monté was indifferent towards him, and he resolved, come what might, to make another appeal to her feelings.

"To be, or not to be," was the question that he would again propound for reconsideration, and he flattered himself that the object of his fond adoration would throw aside her excessive timidity and award him the prize that his patience and devotion so fully merited. While indulging in these pleasing reflections, Mr. Tape slowly trotted homeward, with a flourish of the red banner, which he always flung out to the breeze when he was elated by the whispers of fancy or excited by too frequent sips from the overflowing bowl. On reaching his "den," he forthwith set to work with his pen, and composed the last epistle with which he ever ventured to trouble Miss Monté.

It was on the evening following that Minna, feeling

weary from an unusually long walk in the grounds, seated herself on the grass-covered roots of a huge magnolia-tree which afforded a charming shade, with its evergreen boughs, and its thousands of beautiful flowers, that threw around a delicious perfume. She had thrown herself in an easy and graceful attitude, half erect and half reclining; her beautiful head rested on her tiny hand, which was supported by her elbow, on which she leant. She was seemingly absorbed in watching the retreating rays of the sun,—her straw hat dangled down her back, suspended by a blue ribbon, that held it captive round her neck. On the grass beside her there was a small Indian basket filled with field flowers, and on guard near it stood a beautiful spotted setter. The animal gazed wistfully up in his mistress's face, as if demanding a kind word; but Minna had neither word nor thought to bestow upon the poor animal. She was so wrapped in meditation as to be unaware of the approach of a dark figure in the background, as with stealthy steps, unnoticed by either the mistress or the dog, an old servant drew near. The man held a staff of oak in his left hand, and in the right hand a letter, which he handed to Minna and she received before she had had time to collect her thoughts. When she recovered consciousness, he had passed through the gate, and was retracing his steps at a rapid pace, throwing an occasional glance behind, as if apprehending pursuit. It was Tape's Mercury.

As Minna glanced at the superscription, she thought, "Verily, this amounts to persecution on the part of Tape. The man must be demented. What

*can* I do to get clear of his absurdities? Should I take the letter to uncle, his rage would be so excessive it would alarm aunt, and I dislike the thought of showing it to her; she looks coldly upon me, and is estranged, and I am unable to comprehend it. But of the two evils I will select the least. To aunt I shall take this letter; she shall have no cause for doubting my affection for her, as it is my earnest desire to act at all times in accordance with her wishes."

## CHAPTER XIII.

"Who but for death could find repose  
From life, and life's unnumbered woes?  
From ills that mock our art to cure,  
As hard to fly as to endure?"

ÆSOP.

IN the vicinity of Parkgate there resided a family with whom the Ruits were on the most social and intimate terms. Each member of the household seemed to have won Mr. Ruit's entire confidence. The sympathy was mutual. Mr. and Mrs. Neville appreciated the fine traits of their neighbor's character, and he was too politic to expose the dark shades of the picture.

The Nevilles had mixed much in general society, consequently they were not inclined to meddle with their neighbors' affairs, unless when called upon to render a service. Yet they were for this reason called by many people selfish and proud; while others, more charitable, or with greater knowledge, defended them; but of all this the Nevilles were in blissful ignorance.

It so happened, just as Minna had attained her fifteenth year, that Mrs. Neville and family were going to pass some weeks in the gay city of O—. It was the custom with the Nevilles to spend a portion of the

winter in town. Mr. Neville preferred the country, and considered every day as lost that was not passed at home; therefore he usually took his family down, placed them in a pleasant location, and returned home. Laura, the only child of her parents, insisted that her friend Minna should be invited to accompany her to O—. The request was complied with, and the invitation given. Minna was delighted, and Mr. Ruit gladly gave his consent, as he was desirous that Minna should see something of society, though she was not yet to appear as a grown lady. He gave Mrs. Neville a *carte-blanche*, and requested her to arrange for Minna in every respect as she did for her daughter. "Under your auspices, madam," he said, "she will enjoy opportunities for improvement that may never again offer."

His wishes were adhered to in every particular. Mrs. Neville spared neither pains nor money in arranging and selecting a suitable outfit for her charge, who submitted with childlike docility to every plan proposed for her improvement. With taste as a hand-maiden, and bright gold to light the way, youthful charms expand as rapidly as rosebuds open under the genial influence of summer showers. Minna returned home from the city vastly improved in manners and in appearance. She was full of vivacity, and her gratitude to the Nevilles was unbounded.

One day, when Mr. Ruit was seated on his portico, seemingly absorbed in some work of metaphysics, Minna came and stood before him. She was dressed in a blue silk robe of beautiful shade. She wore a white silk bonnet trimmed with blue ribbon strings,

and blue flowers fastened on the side. The trimmings of the bonnet corresponded with the shade of the dress. When she left her chamber, her impulse was to pass quietly out by the side door without showing herself to her uncle, but gratitude dictated a different course. She thought, "He gives me all that I have, is kind and liberal in every way, yet I do not love him. I wish that aunt were well and happy. A shadow has come over us all; none seem happy. Oh, how I wish Willie were back from that horrid college, then all would be well with me!" With these thoughts flitting through her mind, Minna advanced toward Mr. Ruit and asked, "Uncle, how do you like my dress?"

Mrs. Neville said, "With blue eyes and blue dress some persons would say, 'two blue!'" But she thought the eyes and the dress were like twin sisters, and neither were too blue.

"What say you, sir, to the dress and to the handsome compliment?"

"Dear child, in my opinion all blue things are lovely except two, and I think Mrs. Neville's taste is exquisite. Her compliment, as you style it, was not a compliment, as it was a simple *truth*."

"Thank you, uncle, you are flattering me even more than Mrs. Neville did. But you have excited my curiosity, sir. Will you please inform me which are those exceptionable blues? I desire to avoid all unpleasant things."

"Can you not guess? I hope that neither will cross your path. Can you not guess?"

"No, sir."

"I alluded to 'blue-devils' and 'blue-stockings!' Never, my child, do you touch a pen; if the inclination to write should ever visit you, remember my words, and eschew it as you would the tortures of the Inquisition."

Minna listened attentively to his remarks, and then silently withdrew, leaving him, as she supposed, to resume his reading. Not so; he fell into a deep reverie.

We being behind the scenes can give the reader an introduction to his thoughts. "How mysterious is the human heart! And the mind is yet more inexplicable, ever struggling to dive into the illimitable future, and seeking the unattainable. Can this continue? If it does, shall I be enabled to hold out? Can I possibly resist the temptation that at times drives me to madness? Can either of them know what I suffer? No! A thousand times no!"

It was not very long after the interview on the portico when Mrs. Ruit discovered that her fears had been but too well founded. It was perfectly obvious that teaching astronomy and star-gazing with Minna were occupations infinitely more agreeable to her husband than that of watching over his wife's sick couch. While the invalid was made sick at heart by this humiliating knowledge, she smiled, and tried to smother the agony and despair that were sapping both mind and body and bringing her to an untimely grave.

Mr. Ruit soon became cold and indifferent towards his invalid wife, at times he was even harsh and ungentlemanly in his bearing. To this treatment she offered no resistance, but her sensitive nature quietly

yielded to the storm; she sank rapidly, and in less than six months she was removed from earth.

Minna had bidden adieu to Parkgate months before her aunt's death; she was with her grandmother, who resided in the neighborhood with her married son,—he had removed to the South some years anterior to Mrs. Ruit's death.

The Monté family had detected the cause of Mrs. Ruit's grief, and wisely determined to remove Minna to the house of her Uncle Monté. At first the poor child was ignorant of what was passing in the minds of her seniors. She supposed that absolute quiet in the house was necessary for her aunt's comfort, as she was excessively nervous, and therefore Minna thought it very proper that she should leave temporarily.

On the morning of her departure, Minna repaired to Mr. Ruit's sanctum to say good-by before she quitted the roof that had for years afforded her a happy home.

Before breakfast on that day Mrs. Monté had, for the first time, informed her granddaughter "that her removal from Parkgate would not be temporary, as there were unmentionable reasons that would prevent her allowing Minna ever to return there to reside." So wayward is the human heart that the wisest are unable to account for the phases it assumes, or the rapidity with which those changes occur. Minna's feelings were now of a mingled nature. She thought her removal was a species of persecution on the part of her relatives, and therefore it excited her indignation. She also apprehended that she had inadvertently offended her uncle, as his manner toward her had

changed of late. She entered the library with downcast eyes and timid step, with a shrinking dread of encountering his frown; but she was quickly reassured when he gently took her hand and said,—

"You are going away, I hear,—is it so?"

"Yes, uncle. Grandma says this house must be kept very quiet, as aunt is nervous, and even a step on the stairs disturbs her. I have come to say good-by, and to thank you, sir, for your unceasing kindness to me."

"Good-by, Minna. Will you remember me? I shall never forget you."

She raised her eyes, smiled, and thus they parted,—he to return to the couch of his suffering wife, and she to join her grandmother, who awaited her in the carriage.

That pressure of the hand and that smile was long remembered by both,—spoken words would not have been as indelible. Would that their parting had then been final!

## CHAPTER XIV.

"Life is but a day at most,  
Sprung from night, in darkness lost;  
Hope not sunshine ev'ry hour,  
Fear not, clouds will always lower."

BURNS.

IT was some days after Minna's change of abode before she could feel herself at home, though everything had been done previous to her arrival to promote her comfort,—her books, piano, and bird-cage had been sent in advance; then her reception was so cordial, and her young aunt was so demonstrative in her affectionate desire to render her husband's niece happy, that it was impossible for one of Minna's grateful disposition to be otherwise. At times, she greatly felt the want of her dear friend Mary Temple's society, and this yearning was intensified by the death of her Aunt Ruit; she then felt that Mary's presence was almost a necessity, so much did she need those soothing words that Mary so well knew how to administer. But it was a hopeless desire, as Miss Temple was far away in New England, and months had passed since Minna had received a letter from her or tidings from William. The other members of the Temple family held themselves aloof, and there was a report in circulation, which was supposed to have emanated from them. The rumor was, that "William Temple

had become enamored of the beautiful daughter of one of the professors, and that they would be married after the examination. William was to graduate at that time, and add to his collegiate honors that of bringing home a bride." This rumor had caused Minna deep grief for a time, but she was now accustomed to hearing it spoken of as a fixed fact, and was forced against her will to give it credence.

She was of a nature too high strung to pine for love of one who had ceased to think of her, and whose honor she was compelled to doubt. It was when this conclusion was forced upon her, and when suffering keen agony, that her heart was caught on the rebound. The first sensation was that of intense gratitude for past kindness, then gratified vanity, when she learned in course of time how sincere, how absorbing, a passion she had inspired; but all *this* would never have carried the citadel had not another powerful motive put the finishing stroke and caused it to surrender. But we are forestalling.

From the commencement of Mrs. Ruit's illness, Minna had passed a considerable portion of time with Laura Neville. After her removal to Mr. Monté's, she was more than ever with her friend; Laura and Minna had been on terms of the closest intimacy and affection since the memorable and delightful visit to O—. Nevertheless, Minna, while really attached to Laura, remembered sweet Mary Temple with an undying love; not a day passed without her recalling those happy school-girl days when there were no shadows to darken the sunshine of existence.

It was only at Mr. Neville's that Minna and Mr.

Ruit met after her aunt's death, as her grandmother had had a pious horror of her once highly prized son-in-law before that event. It was quite natural, since the only tie that united them was severed, that all social intercourse should cease,—the old lady feared that he exercised an undue influence over her granddaughter. This impression was so repugnant to her feelings that she speedily determined to return to the West, and place Minna at a school of high repute, where she would keep her for at least a year, during which time she hoped many changes might occur.

In the first days of his solitude and grief, Mr. Ruit closed his doors and led the life of a hermit, mourning, so thought the world, the departed wife; but the world, as usual, made a grand error, for neither his heart nor his thoughts were under the sod. This seclusion was continued for only a few months, then Mr. Ruit emerged from his shell and buzzed about, seeking amusement, and flirting with all who were that way inclined. He greatly admired the economy of the bee, and liked to sip honey from every sweet flower that came within his reach. But this flirting was only done in order to while away the time of Minna's absence, and with the view of bringing the old lady back to the South; he never for a moment swerved from his purpose, or from his loyalty to Minna, during the first half-year of her absence. After that his natural inconstancy got the better of him; had the slightest encouragement been bestowed, he would have unhesitatingly offered himself to Laura Neville; but he was quickly disabused of any such thoughts by Mrs. Neville. When she discovered what was passing



in his mind, she quietly frowned down his attempts at gallantry without giving him offense. One morning when he was calling at the Lodge, Mrs. Neville laughingly said, "Laura and I differ in opinion with regard to beaux. She thinks a lover over nineteen would be terribly uninteresting, and never to be mentioned or thought of as a husband; while, in my humble opinion, the older they are the safer, and more worthy of being trusted, if any are to be trusted, of which I have some doubt."

Eighteen months had slipped away since Minna's departure for school, when Laura Neville received the following letter from her friend:

"DEAREST LAURA,—I am delighted to say to you that I have graduated, full of honors and triumphs. I actually won the golden medal, when every young lady in my class was striving for it; but all this success is only a trifle when compared with the other news I have to impart. Oh, Laura, I am in ecstasies! we are to return to your neighborhood, to reside again with Uncle Monté. Grandma decided upon this plan very recently. She does not introduce me to her thoughts at all times, yet I find them out by hook and by crook.

"When is Uncle Ruit to be married to that pretty little Roberta Berry? The report here is that they are positively engaged; some have gone so far as to say 'that they were married last month.' Grandma believes the report, but I do not, because I know reports of this sort are often circulated when there is no foundation for them. I do not pretend to be much of

a judge, but, really, Roberta is not the person that I would select for Uncle Ruit. Grandma says she feels assured that it is true; for this reason, she remembers hearing Mrs. Berry say, 'Mr. Ruit is a good match for any young lady,—he has a fine estate.'

"Please, when you see Uncle Ruit, mention what I have written, and see if he denies his engagement. If he is to be married, tell him 'I hope to be down in time to attend the wedding.'

"Please make my kindest regards acceptable to Mr. and Mrs. Neville, and for yourself,

"Dear Laura, accept much love from your attached  
"MINNA."

## CHAPTER XV.

"Oh! fair as the sea-flower close to thee growing,  
How light was thy heart till Love's witchery came,  
Like the wind of the south o'er a summer lute blowing,  
And hushed all its music, and withered its frame!"

T. MOORE.

WHEN Laura had read her friend's letter through, she sat for some time in deep thought, forming a thousand plans for their amusement.

"Papa and mamma shall give Minna a grand party as soon as she arrives; and then, in midwinter, we will all go down to the city, and mamma shall find a splendid prince as a lover for Minna, and they shall be married before William Temple brings home his Puritan bride. Heigh-ho! I wonder if I ever will be married? After William Temple's treatment of Minna, I shall never more place faith in men. The creatures are, by far, more fickle than we are. I am so glad Minna had too much spirit to pine. She will be here in a few days now."

Miss Neville's reverie was interrupted by her mamma, who ran into the room under a great state of excitement. "Oh, Laura, Mr. Monté is dead! How sudden, and how sad it is for his poor wife and children! They were a devoted couple. She is so young to be left alone with her little family, and no relatives near to console and aid her."

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"Mamma, can it be true? I am so sorry for Minna."

"It is but too true, my love. Minna's loss is great, but my thoughts and my sympathies are centred on the widow."

The death of Mr. Monté was indeed a lamentable event; his family, from being happy and prosperous, were plunged into grief and poverty.

He had only a few months before his death removed to a comfortable residence, and his sweet wife united with him in anticipating much pleasure in having his venerable mother and orphan niece as inmates. Alas! that ruthless slayer, from whom there is no escaping, claimed this estimable man as his own when his young family so much needed his care. Such is life. We can only bow in humble submission. The poor widow was silent and uncomplaining in the presence of the friends who surrounded her, but her distress was the more violent when she could retire within the solitude of her chamber and, unseen, give vent to her agony.

A few days after her arrival, and when all parties were more composed, Mrs. Monté learned from the young widow, and with much surprise, that Mr. Ruit was not engaged, and never had been, to Miss Roberta Berry. She said, "There had been such a rumor afloat, and that Mr. Ruit had encouraged it by his frequent calls at Mr. Berry's, and when bantered about his approaching marriage, he seemed delighted. But the Berry family were indignant, and Mrs. Berry sharply rebuked Miss Clatter when she presumed to speak to Roberta on the subject, and to insinuate that Parkgate was the attraction."

Mr. Ruit's scheme was deep and well laid; he made puppets of all around him. As *he* pulled the wires, they moved in accordance with his will. Greatly to Mrs. Monté's annoyance, she learned, when she had been two months in the neighborhood, that Minna had often met Mr. Ruit at Mr. Neville's. From that moment the old lady was upon the alert, and it soon became obvious to her that Minna was silent and fond of solitude after her visits to Miss Neville. She would not interrogate her granddaughter, but she could not divest herself of the belief that Ruit was plotting against her peace. Her anxiety became so intense that she determined to quit forever a State in which she had suffered so much, and to return to her home in the West in early spring. Mrs. Monté was painfully confirmed in her decision when she learned that her son's establishment would have to be disposed of, and his widow be compelled to seek aid from her own relatives.

It was a gloomy winter at the "Cottage," and as spring approached, it was necessary that the Montés should make their final arrangements with regard to the future before the sale took place. The two widows discussed their family affairs freely in the presence of Minna, but she avoided the subject and would not express her views; as she was now eighteen, the right of deciding for herself was conceded to her by her grandmother.

It was on one of those terribly bright days in March when the dazzling sunshine renders us gloomy and wretched that Minna said, "Grandma, I am invited to dine at Mr. Neville's to-morrow. When I return I

will make up my mind with regard to our plans for the future, as you are so kind as to allow me to have a voice in the matter."

"I shall be pleased, my dear child, to hear any remarks that you may wish to make; but no change can be effected in my plans, as we are compelled to leave here for the West on the 1st of May."

A few days previous to this conversation between Mrs. Monté and Minna, Mr. Ruit had called at the Lodge. On leaving, he asked Mrs. Neville "if she would be so kind as to permit him to meet Minna when next she came to pass the day with Miss Laura."

"Certainly, Mr. Ruit, do come and assist us in making the day pleasant for the poor child. Mrs. Monté's house is a gloomy home for her, and then I think Minna feels her dependent position, and much dislikes the idea of returning to the West to reside; but it cannot be avoided, as the old lady will not remain after her daughter-in-law leaves."

"I had been thinking that there was a contest going on in that quarter. That antediluvian hypocrite will tease the poor child until she throws her into ill health, or makes a Methodist of her,—which would be worse."

"Excuse me, Mr. Ruit, but you should remember we must all grow old or die. So pray be more lenient to the aged."

"I should be very kind to them, for I would send them all to heaven. In my opinion, no lady should be *detained* on earth much longer than forty years."

"You are incorrigible. What would your dear, de-

lightful friend, the quondam governess, say to your anathemas and strictures upon the fair sex? She would not pardon you."

"Oh, of course, there would be some honorable exceptions. My fair friend may live as long as she likes, and tease her husband to her heart's content. What care I?"

When Minna arrived at the Lodge, Mr. Ruit was in waiting to hand her from the carriage. After they had dined, and the party reassembled in the drawing-room, Mrs. Neville and Miss Laura retired, thereby affording their visitors an opportunity for a private interview. These good ladies supposed that the uncle had a plan to suggest for Minna's benefit,—probably an offer to obtain a situation as governess or as teacher in a public school. At the expiration of half an hour they returned to their guests. They found Minna on the sofa, and Mr. Ruit sitting by her side; they appeared embarrassed as the ladies entered, but quickly recovered self-possession, when Mrs. Neville remarked, "There goes Miss Roberta Berry on horseback. She rides splendidly, and is as white as a snow-drop."

Laura ran to the window and said, turning to Mr. Ruit, "I wonder who her cavalier is. He is about the size of a monkey. The contrast between him and Miss Berry renders him ridiculous; she is so tall and he so small. I think diminutive gentlemen should show more taste and more tact than to select large belles as partners, but they delight in amazons, and always make this absurd error."

"Yes, my dear," replied Mrs. Neville, "I remember when little Miss Fonly was engaged to that splendid

Mr. Mac,' who stood six feet two inches in his stockings. Many amiable persons laughed, and one said, 'Miss Fonly loved Mac for his inches, and Mac was *fond* of her for measures of another denomination!' As you may suppose, it was a disappointed lover who made this *witty* speech."

This episode restored the parties to ease. Mr. Ruit remarked, "I think Miss Roberta Berry's costume inappropriate. She has a hat and long feather, which is very becoming and appropriate, but her dress is cut in the *décolleté* style, which is unseemly at all times, but especially so on horseback. She might shorten her flag and give more play to her mainsail with advantage. What say you, Miss Laura?"

"Probably your strictures are just, but I think, Mr. Ruit, you are feeling a little bit jealous of the happy man who is now cantering by Miss Berry's side. Please do not challenge him, there is blood-shedding enough done in the world by soldiers in time of war. In my opinion, sensible people should give up dueling. I think it a sinful practice. Would not you feel very miserable the rest of your days were you to kill a man?"

"There is no danger in this case. Believe me, I shall eschew evil, and never run a tilt with any devotee who worships at Miss Berry's shrine."

As it was verging towards sunset, Minna said,—

"I must leave; the carriage has been at the door for some minutes."

Mr. Ruit did not offer to accompany her to the Cottage, he had no wish to meet his mother-in-law face to face. Their feelings towards each other were entirely in accord; the hatred was mutual.

The next morning Minna sought her grandmother's apartment, in order to comply with the promise made on the day before her last visit to the Lodge. She found Mrs. Monté seated in a large easy-chair by an open window. She was knitting, and on her lap lay a Prayer-Book and a large, old-fashioned watch.

"Ah," exclaimed Minna, "I find you watching and praying, grandmamma! I wish others did so, and I for one."

"My child, what have I to live for, beside my daily duty to God, and the little that I can do to promote your happiness?"

"Indeed, beloved grandmother, you are too kind to your ungrateful Minna."

Their conversation was protracted, and unsatisfactory; tears were abundantly shed, but Minna was firm to her purpose. She did not follow the example of "Ruth towards Naomi," but positively declined returning with her aged relative to the West, though she was earnestly besought to do so. Minna's course had been mapped by one whose influence was paramount to Mrs. Monté's. Would that we could plead that she was influenced by a deep sense of gratitude for the kindness she had received, and the many obligations she was under, in extenuation of her conduct! Be not shocked, dear reader, at the tale we tell. The truth has to come. This guileless young girl was so fully entangled in the snares set for her, that she professed, and really fancied herself, ardently attached to her *ci-devant* uncle, who was to become her husband.

"The Goddess of Beauty and Persuasion favors the suit of the rich man," so said "Horace." We do not

subscribe in full to the sentiment, neither do we apply it to Minna. It was not the "glamour of glare" alone that blinded her. She was under the influence of a passion which had been gradually awakened. It arose, in the first stage, from intense gratitude for his untiring exertions to gratify her every wish; but she was yet more influenced, though unconsciously, by mortification and pique at the supposed perfidy of her first lover, on whom she had bestowed unbounded affection. Mr. Ruit's expressions of ardent devotion softened her heart, but the crowning stroke of fate that made her his was the violent opposition of her relatives, and more especially her grandmother, who objected to the union, and, moreover, unhesitatingly said "that Mr. Ruit had broken her daughter's heart, and, if it were possible, she would save Minna from a similar fate." Her strictures passed unheeded. Minna was perfectly acquainted with the peculiar disposition of Mr. Ruit; she had resided too long under his roof not to have been familiar with his faults. In this case knowledge did not give power. Minna was a mere puppet in the hands of her *fiancé*. Well and skillfully did he throw his spells and his meshes around her innocent and confiding heart. It was truly interesting to Mrs. Neville to see this young girl's devotion to her uncle, as that lady was quite in the dark at that time as to the game he was playing.

There were moments when he wrapped himself up within himself like a conch in its shell, and scarcely spoke a dozen words during his interviews with Minna. At other moments he would be gay and cheerful, and he then "begged of her never to notice

those dark phases, as they were constitutional, and would pass quickly if unnoticed." In one particular he was unchangeable. He was, at all times, as subtle as the serpent. Woe unto those who thwarted his wishes, or gave him cause to doubt their allegiance! In such cases his heart was as hard as flint.

While this unnatural affair was progressing, Mrs. Neville and her daughter were quite unsuspecting of what was going on, and neither of them would have listened to a suggestion of the sort from any one; they would have considered it an unkindness to Minna had they countenanced such a rumor.

As Miss Neville had been entertaining a friend from a distant parish, and a longer period than usual elapsed without her receiving a communication from the Cottage, she was uneasy about Minna, and apprehensive of something she scarcely knew what. With this thought possessed, she remarked to Mrs. Neville, on the morning after the departure of the friend who had been making a somewhat protracted visit at the Lodge, "Mamma, I am afraid that something serious or distressing has occurred at the Cottage. I think Minna or some other member of the family must be ill, or she would have been here. I will write and ask if she is ill, or making preparations to be ma——"

She was interrupted by a servant, who announced Mr. Ruit. After the usual greetings, Laura said,—

"Mr. Ruit, do you ever see Minna? I wonder what detains her so closely at home. I do believe, if she is not ill, that she is preparing her trousseau. Has she a lover that you are aware of?"

"I have not heard of one, though it is quite proba-

ble that a gay cavalier from the West may have come to bear her off."

"I cannot think that," said Mrs. Neville; "as Minna so much dreads the idea of returning with her grandmother, she would be unwilling to go as a bride."

"Had Minna lovers while at school? You, I presume, are in her confidence, Miss Laura?"

"You must seek knowledge from the fountain-head. Ask Minna."

"In my opinion," said Mrs. Neville, "however much Minna may object to a permanent home in the West, she will do her duty, and yield unhesitatingly to the wishes of her guardian. It would distress me to think otherwise."

"So think I," replied Mr. Ruit.

"I veto the plan, or would, had I the power," remarked Laura. "Old Mrs. Monté should not drag Minna away against her wishes had I a say in the matter. Some persons can only think of themselves, and they like to rule all around them with an iron sway. I intend no disrespect to you, mamma, because you always allow me to please myself. As to papa, I can twist him around my finger and make him do as I please."

It was scarcely a month after this conversation that Mr. Ruit made an excuse for not accepting an invitation to a party at Mr. Berry's, and quietly left for the city. Miss Clatter said she believed the Berrys repented, and would like to recall Mr. Ruit to Miss Roberta's feet, as they feared beaux might be scarce if there should be a war.

So closely had Minna guarded her secret that this

astute lady, who always found out everything, had not guessed it. The visit to the city was made for an express purpose. Mr. Ruit, ever subtle, had arranged with Minna that she should take advantage of his absence and make a call at the Lodge; while there, she could reveal her secret to Mrs. Neville and Laura. This was of a piece with the selfishness that was natural to him. Minna, who was so birdlike in disposition, had to perform a part that he had not moral courage enough to undertake. She knew that her friends felt a deep interest in her future, and were loth to have her leave for the West, therefore she felt less embarrassment in making the communication than she would have felt under other circumstances. When Laura jestingly said, "So, Miss Monté, you have been buying your trousseau at Mr. Titbat's store (a roadside store). I should like to know who is to be the happy man."

"Can you not guess? Try."

"Is it the professor who was so devoted to you at school? or is it Mr. Tape, of ancient Parkgate memory?"

At this allusion to Parkgate, Minna blushed excessively, and thereupon Laura, who was quick to take an idea, exclaimed, "I do believe it is Mr. Ruit! Is it, Minna?"

"Yes, it is Mr. Ruit. And what say you to it?"

"Oh, you are jesting. He is your uncle."

"He *once* was; but you are aware, dear Laura, that Mr. Ruit is not a blood relation of mine."

"Well, well, dear Minna! I trust that you may be happy. It is a great relief to know that you are not to leave us and go to the West."

Mrs. Neville's astonishment was only equaled by her regret. In love affairs relatives never effect a change of sentiment by opposition, and friends are yet more powerless. Being perfectly aware that the attempt would be in vain, Mrs. Neville made no effort to induce Minna to pause and allow herself time for reflection before she took so important, so fearful, a step as the contemplated union undoubtedly would prove. "Sappho-like," Minna *would* take the leap,—the result will be developed by time.

The marriage was hastened in consequence of the expected sale of the Monté property. The celebration of this marriage gave rise to much comment among the neighborhood gossips. Old Miss Clatter said she knew what was brewing from the time that she saw Mr. Ruit, with his hat cocked to one side and a red rose in his buttonhole, driving Miss Monté to a dinner-party at Mr. Neville's; she had not spoken of it at the time, because she disliked gossiping. Yes, she did remember speaking of it once in a whisper to Mrs. Berry, and that lady, with a knowing wink, replied, "He merely drove Minna out with the hope of piquing Roberta. Mr. Ruit is too sensible a man to put himself in old Mrs. Monté's power again. The old lady is very pious, but I have been told she is very bitter against her son-in-law ever since she heard that he wished to marry Roberta. In fact, some have suggested that she was induced to return to the South in consequence of this report, and that her aim has been to bring about a marriage between her granddaughter and Mr. Ruit."

Mrs. Berry came about as near the truth as persons

usually do when they undertake to pry into the secret motives by which others are actuated.

There were very few persons present at the marriage; Mr. Neville and his daughter were invited to attend "as witnesses," so said Mr. Ruit. Many bitter tears were shed by the aged grandmother on that sad spring morning. She seemed in utter despair at the thought of having to part with her cherished Minna, and her grief was the more keen because that she foresaw the trials that awaited the poor girl.

Laura Neville found Minna weeping when she arrived at the Cottage. She immediately thought, I must control my feelings in order to cheer Minna. "Ah, Miss Monté, my dear, I find you as usual, overflowing with sympathy. We have no showers from the clouds this morning, therefore you are opening *your* floodgates. Pray, Minna, why is a bride like an April day? Do you give it up? I am too deep for you, am I?"

"Yes, Laura, you are; so enlighten me."

"Because they both shine one minute and shower the next!"

"I shall shower no more."

"I have an idea, Minna, you are sad at having to relinquish all claim henceforth forever to that beautiful red banner and its gallant bearer, 'the owl.' I saw him prowling about under the shade of a willow-tree, with the banner flung out to the breeze, as we passed, on our way here. I hope he was not on desperate thoughts intent. I assure you he looked not at all like a sane man. So, Miss Monté, if any accident should happen, we'll have you arrested as an accessory

before the fact. 'An arrested bride!' What a nice heading for a newspaper paragraph!"

"Oh, Laura, how can you jest about such trifles at this awful moment? I see the Rev. Mr. Pintard and Unc—— Mr. Ruit approaching the house at this very moment."

The conversation was interrupted by a gentle tap at the door; it was the young widow; she came to say the clergyman was waiting, and Mr. Ruit wished her to ask if the bride was ready and if he could come up to lead her down.

Laura replied, "Yes, she is ready and willing. And if he does not hasten there will be a shower."

When the ceremony was over, and the fatal knot firmly tied, Mr. Ruit and his bride partook of a cold collation; he then hurried the leave-taking, and seemed not to enter into Minna's feelings at parting with her family, nor did he appreciate the agony of the old lady, who was but too forcibly reminded of a similar occasion, when she freely bestowed her only daughter upon one so fitted, as she then thought, for promoting the happiness of both herself and her daughter. Alas, how signally did he fail! "But it is unwise to grieve in advance." On coming to this sensible decision, Mrs. Monté dried her tears.



## CHAPTER XVI.

"As passeth ripples on the sea,  
Passed happiness away from me;  
As a breath breathed on a glass,  
Not to rest came it, but to pass."

THE newly-wedded pair soon grew weary of traveling, and returned after an absence of two weeks. They came *incog.*, in order, as Mr. Ruit said, to be free from visitors, at least for a time. Cards were sent out for a reception on the 16th; until that day they were *not at home*. While traveling, a servant annoyed Mr. Ruit excessively by asking, "Will your daughter have breakfast sent to the room?" This opened his eyes to the fact that he was no longer young. When his wife took her seat at the table a few moments after, she speedily perceived that something had gone wrong,—he seemed petulant and unhappy. She thought to soften him by remarking on the breakfast.

"This is a delightful breakfast. We have an excellent waiter."

"I think the coffee abominable. What say you to our leaving on to-morrow morning and going directly to Parkgate? I can promise you an excellent cup of coffee, and I think we will be in every way more comfortable in our own house."

"Oh, let us go by all means! I long to see dear  
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old Parkgate of childhood memory. I have not been there for two years."

Their arrival, though unheralded, was attended by no *contretemps*. The kind-hearted domestics smiled and curt'sied, and said, "You are welcome home, Miss Minna; we are mighty glad, honey, that massa never went Berry hunting for a wife." At this piece of wit there was a suppressed laugh. Minna had secured a small souvenir for each member of the household, which rendered them happy and grateful. This pleasant reception brought sunshine to her heart. All shadows had vanished, and Minna was as merry as a cricket, and as full of carol as a bird. She entered with unfeigned zest and energy upon her household duties; life seemed as bright with her as sunshine in the flowery month of May. She once more luxuriated in roaming through the grounds and culling field-flowers. Mr. Ruit gloried in gratifying every desire of her heart. Minna's pride and vanity were both satisfied. Jewels were lavished upon her, and equipages provided for her use, beside many other luxuries that her predecessor had vainly sighed for.

Mr. and Mrs. Neville and their daughter were among the first who called on Minna; they found her so bright and joyous that Mrs. Neville gladly confessed to Laura that she had croaked like a raven, and that her fears and anxieties had been entirely groundless. Mr. Ruit was in high spirits, and frequently joined Miss Laura in teasing his wife about her pet bird, the owl.

Had an allusion been made to William Temple, or  
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had he suspected Minna's secret, the explosion of his wrath would have been terrific.

In concealing this affair, Minna greatly erred,—she should have made a full confession to Mr. Ruit before their marriage of this episode in her girlhood; but the poor girl was in a measure excusable. She was so heart-sore that she flinched from the thought of exposing her wounds. This want of moral courage was followed by many disastrous results.

In the first year of Minna's married life no events occurred worthy of being chronicled. It was during the second summer that clouds began to gather and gradually increase, until Minna's path was completely overshadowed. Her ecstatic visions faded before the stern realities of life. A few more months, and she felt her fetters galling.

After a protracted absence, John Monté, about this time, appeared in the neighborhood of Parkgate. He had not improved in character, and was even more implacable in his feelings towards his sister than he was when they parted years before. John, very wisely, did not attempt to regain the position he once held in Mr. Ruit's affections, or in his house; he too well knew of what stubborn stuff that gentleman was composed to essay an inroad; his rôle was that of the aggrieved man.

Among the guests at Parkgate, at the reception after Minna's marriage, was a little Miss Ella Bagby, who became from that day a frequent visitor, and seeming to feel a romantic attachment for Mrs. Ruit, was well pleased whenever invited to pass the day with her.

After the arrival of John Monté in the neighborhood, Miss Ella's visits at Parkgate ceased, at which Minna felt a little astonished until she learned that John was devoting himself to Miss Bagby; this at once explained the young lady's conduct. John's was not so easy to fathom; the presumption was that he wished to annoy his sister, by proving that his influence over the young lady was paramount. If this were not the motive, what could it be? Of course, thought Minna, "John has too much sense to be really addressing Ella Bagby. I think Mrs. Bagby should not permit him to flirt with her daughter. John, like the other members of his family, is too anxious to ascend in the world to think of uniting himself for life with a lady who has neither wealth nor great expectations." Minna's reasoning was excellent, except that the ensuing facts did not sustain her.

John's demonstrations were approvingly received by the young lady, and her mother seemed delighted at the prospect of a wedding. The silly mother was positively planning the style of cap she would wear (and the color of the ribbon with which it should be trimmed) on the interesting occasion.

The suitableness of the match, or whether it would promote the happiness of her daughter or insure her misery, seemed not to have entered the head of Mrs. Bagby; but the good lady really was not as selfish as we may be leading the reader to suppose. She employed some spare moments in planning Miss Ella's trousseau. She decided that every bridal article should be simple and elegant, and there should be no attempt at display.

When the engagement was acknowledged, Mr. Ruit deemed it his duty to warn Mrs. Bagby of the certain misery she was dooming her daughter to by allowing her to marry so ill-tempered and unprincipled a young man as he knew John Monté to be. He remarked, "It is not my habit, madame, to meddle with the affairs of my neighbors, but I professed a friendship for your late excellent husband, and this is my apology for speaking."

Like many others of her sex, Mrs. Bagby could only credit an assertion when she wished it to be true. She thanked Mr. Ruit for his kind interest in her daughter's welfare, and promised to give his communication due consideration. "She would act prudently, as trifles often produced disastrous results."

On the following morning, when young Monté made his call, Mrs. Bagby quickly informed him of Mr. Ruit's having made her a call. She then repeated every word that had been uttered by the friend of her husband. John's wrath was not loud, but deep. He swore he would avenge himself when the right moment should arrive for inflicting punishment.

The Bagby-Monté marriage was greatly accelerated by the opposition that Mr. Ruit was supposed to feel, while, in reality, he was utterly indifferent to the fate of the parties. He had performed what he deemed a duty; after that he gave no further heed to the affair.

The announcement of the marriage in the *Herald* was amusingly *incorrect*. It was headed—

#### "MARRIAGE IN HIGH LIFE.

"Married.—At Seefit Hall, the residence of her mother, Miss Ella Bagby, daughter of the late Honor-

able Richard Bagby, to John Monté, Esq., adopted son of the Honorable Henry Ruit, of Parkgate, in the parish of Nonesuch.

"There was a splendid reception at the palatial residence of Mr. Ruit. After partaking of a choice collation of viands, the happy pair departed to make a tour in the West."

When Mr. Ruit saw the announcement, he said, "Miserable wretch! he had this falsehood published to give him credit with some dupe that he intends swindling."

The marriage in reality was very private, and the parties, accompanied by Mrs. Bagby, left immediately for a distant part of the State, where John had established himself on a small farm. Mrs. Bagby was excessively anxious to make her escape from Mr. Ruit's propinquity, as she greatly dreaded an encounter with him after her unladylike tattling and betrayal of a communication that she volunteered to consider confidential.

Mr. and Mrs. Ruit were not notified of the time appointed for the marriage. Neither did they know of the departure of the Monté family for some days after they had left. It was then communicated by Miss Clatter, who called, as she said, "to see if Mr. or Mrs. Ruit were ill."

"Well, Mrs. Ruit, your sister and brother left, as you are aware, on Thursday, though you were not there to take leave. I went up to say good-by. I have been very busy ever since, for they pressed me into service. Mrs. Bagby seemed much distressed at leaving

'Seefit Hall,' and my heart bled for her. She requested me to pack the furniture and forward it. I have done so, and the place is for sale. What a splendid couple that is! They contrast so well, Miss Ella being blonde and her husband as dark as a Spaniard. And they suit so well in age, both are youthful and fresh. I dislike this mating of old persons with young ones, unless——"

Minna caught up the word and said, "Unless they are attached, Miss Clatter, and have sense enough to act independently, and suit themselves, without regard to what Mrs. Grundy says."

"That is precisely my opinion. You have uttered my very words. Good-by, Mrs. Ruit, I must be off. I am happy to find you in such blissful health. I saw Mr. Ruit on the road, he looked as bright as a button and as juvenile as a school-boy."

"Mamma," said Laura Neville, "we have not seen or heard from Minna for two weeks. Suppose we drive up this evening to Parkgate and see what those ring-doves are about?"

"Certainly, my love, we will go; the roads are splendid, and I shall be pleased to take advantage of the absence of the sun. We can return by moonlight; then the driving will be delightful. I love not sunshine, it gives one the blues."

"Oh, mamma! how can you be so affected or eccentric? Which shall I say?"

"Say both affected and eccentric, if you please. It is nevertheless true. I really consider bright, sunshiny days oppressive; they seem to mock at all who are less happy than they themselves are."

The ladies called at Parkgate. While returning home, Mrs. Neville remarked, "I think a change has come over Minna. What say you, Laura?"

"I noted the change, mamma, and should have mentioned it if you had not done so."

It was but too true that Minna was awakening from love's thralldom, which for a time had resembled a deep sleep or a sort of unholy enchantment. A painful pensiveness now possessed her soul. Buoyancy had shaken hands with Minna, and grim care had come to fill its place. There was an adequate cause for this feeling of despair. She had discovered that her husband, while he professed to believe in no religion, save morality, was really a Mormon in belief and in practice. He deemed infidelity to the Creator or to his creatures a mere matter of moonshine. He boasted that *he* believed only in nature and natural causes. Scarcely had Minna numbered two years of married life when there was a sudden check given to her happiness. Previous to *her* union with Mr. Ruit there had been a person residing in the neighborhood with whom he was on the most friendly terms; she had now returned after a long absence. This woman was ambitious and intriguing; she resolved to place herself on a more intimate footing than she had been in bygone days. Mr. Ruit was represented as being a devoted husband; if she could estrange him, so much the greater would be her triumph. In former days *she* had been trammelled, but was now unfettered. With regard to *his* marriage vows, she well knew that he considered them binding only so long as it was his pleasure to esteem them so.

Soon after the arrival of this individual at Vine Cottage, as Mr. and Mrs. Ruit were loitering one morning over the breakfast-table, a note was handed to him. He tore off the envelope and read the following lines:

"MY VERY DEAR FRIEND,—I have returned to mamma, and find myself a pensioner; and what is still more annoying, I am encumbered with an infant for mamma to support. The wretched father of this child took it into his head to die, and inhumanly left us as poor as pinching poverty can make us. Oh, it was a cruel act! I never can forgive him. Dear friend, can you not spare half an hour from your lovely and beloved wife to bestow upon your afflicted friend of other days?

"To visit the widow and the orphan was a lesson you learned in early life, and I feel assured, by my knowledge of your tender and sympathizing heart, that you have not forgotten the teaching that was so entirely in accord with your exalted impulses.

"If Madame Ruit would condescend to call with you, mamma and I would feel highly honored.

"Your old friend,

"LEONORA FLATTÉ."

When he had read the note, Mr. Ruit said, "Minna, here is a note from poor Leonora Flatté. I was not aware of her being a widow. What say you, shall we call? But read what she says, and then we will decide."

She received the note, read it, and then said, "Cer-

tainly we will call. The poor lady must be deeply afflicted, so much so as to have been unconscious of the bearing of a portion of her note. I allude to the remarks with relation to her husband's dying and leaving her in poverty."

Mr. Ruit rose, and, with a slight curl of his lip, which was unnoticed by his wife, said, "If I order the carriage at twelve o'clock, will that hour be agreeable to you for making the call? I have to drive out to attend to some matters of business, but will hurry through, in order to join you at 'Vine Cottage.'"

Minna winced a little from this arrangement, but replied, "Pray endeavor to be in time. If it were possible, I should much prefer you to accompany me; but of course it is best that you should suit your own convenience." And he did so by stepping into his buggy and driving immediately to Vine Cottage, where he enjoyed a delightful *tête-à-tête* with Madame Flatté before his wife's carriage appeared at the Cottage door.

The meeting between the ladies was quite cordial; Minna would have been even more so under other circumstances: she was annoyed, on arriving, to see her husband emerge from the house with the calm demeanor of one who was ready to depart, which proved that his business had been with his interesting friend Leonora. Notwithstanding this discovery, she controlled her chagrin and smiled on him as pleasantly as usual when he handed her from the carriage.

"Ah, you have come, dear Mrs. Ruit. How kind you are in responding so readily to the little billet that I took the liberty of sending to your good hus-

band! We are old friends. I can never forget his kindness in bygone days, when I had a severe illness, and the physician ordered nourishment that dear mamma was unable to procure. I must have died but for Mr. Ruit's liberality in supplying me with brandy and wine. I never flatter, but I would say, if he were not present, that you are supremely blessed in possessing such a jewel of a husband."

"It is you, madame, who are so amiable as to over-appreciate my small favors, when they were not worthy of being remembered."

When Minna returned home from "Vine Cottage," she was as well acquainted with the character of the widow as if she had known her for years.

"Yes, she is, beyond a doubt, a heartless coquette, and expects to win her way in the world by flattering her dupes. How well her disposition and her name correspond! She cannot deceive me with her winning ways. I noticed her leering, and smiling significantly at my husband. Such jades should be caught and placed in a nunnery. Had I a voice in the matter, *she* should be placed without delay in the convent of the 'Sacré Cœur.' She would be protected and supported there. I believe she would flirt with an octogenarian, if one came in her way and allowed her to flatter him. That woman craves admiration as eagerly as the pursued doe craves a draught from the purling brook."

These were the reflections of a jealous wife. Were they just, or the reverse, time would show. In Madame Flatté's thirst for admiration Mr. Ruit fully sympathized. His desire in life was to be blindly adored.

She was aware of his weak points, and shaped her course accordingly.

If, on her husband's return home, after an unusual long absence, Minna ventured to ask, in a playful way, "Where have you been? and who did you see this morning?"

"I have been performing a Christian duty. Is it not right to visit the widow and the orphan in their affliction?"

"If crying is indicative of affliction, I think," said Minna, "the orphan suffers more than the widow; he was screeching awfully when I last called there, and I do believe he was locked up in a closet."

As time rolled on, Mr. Ruit's calls at Vine Cottage became more and more frequent, and it was an undeniable fact that Leonora Flatté had flattered him so far as to enable her to exercise a powerful influence over his sensual heart. In six months from the time of her advent in the neighborhood, she had coaxed him into the belief that he was dearer to her than all else beside, either on earth or in heaven. She said for his sake she would risk her soul. She knew how to touch the mainspring of his existence. Flattery was her great weapon, and she used it freely.

## CHAPTER XVII.

"The weary night is waning fast,  
The promised hour is come and past;  
Yet, sleepless and alone I lie,  
Alone,—ah, false one! tell me why."

SAPPHO.

**STRIKING** events are of rare occurrence in quiet families, especially when there are neither young children nor unmarried persons about the premises. At the expiration of another year, as it was to be supposed that Minna would never be blessed with children, Mr. Ruit kindly proposed that they should send for her youngest sister, Louisa, who was unhappily situated. The persons with whom she resided were indigent, illiterate, and unrefined. When he mentioned the subject to Minna, she gratefully assented, and exclaimed, "Oh, it will be a kind and charitable act! You are ever liberal and thoughtful. Would that I knew how to express the profound sense of gratitude that causes my heart to overflow when I sum up your numberless acts of liberality bestowed upon me and my family!"

It was decided that they would send for Louisa without delay,—she would be placed at school, and after her education was completed, and she worthy of

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being introduced to their friends, she would become a permanent inmate at Parkgate

"I presume," said Mr. Ruit, "that your happiness will be promoted by having a companion with you when I am from home, as I am often compelled to be. I find that agents and bailiffs are important on an estate, but the eye of the master is yet more so; therefore I shall look around more than has been my habit heretofore."

Mr. Ruit's visits to the Cottage had assumed a serious character, they were so frequent and lengthy that Minna could not be so obtuse as not to perceive that she was a neglected wife and that her husband's affections were alienated.

One day when they were holding a confidential conversation, and he seemed more like his former self, she alluded to the obvious change that had come over him. To Minna's amazement, instead of denying the charge, he had the audacity to reply thus,—

"Minna, should I ever leave you for a short time, regard it not; for I will assuredly return to you with renewed interest and devotion."

Minna laughed, and pretended to receive his words as if said in jest, but the iron of despair sank deep in her soul. It was the day after the one on which this conversation occurred that Mrs. Neville and Laura made the call at Parkgate, and perceived that a sad change had come over Minna. How truthfully does the eye of affection read the thoughts of those they love from the tell-tale countenance!

It was in June that Miss Neville received a note

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that afforded her infinite pleasure, and ardently did she sympathize with Minna in her happiness.

"MRS. RUIT TO MISS NEVILLE:

"DEAREST LAURA,—My sister has arrived from the West. She is not the little Louisa that I left years back, as she has outgrown my imaginings. Come and judge for yourself. Louisa is plain in appearance and is entirely uneducated, but she is my sister, and I welcome her gladly to my heart and to my hearth. Should she prove herself amiable and affectionate in disposition, my happiness will be greatly augmented. When she returns from school she will be domiciled with us. Time now often hangs heavily on my hands. I trust it will be as light as a feather in future. Indeed, I am resolved to make it so. Oh, Laura! I have some news for you that must astonish you not a little. Mr. William Temple has returned home from New England, and *without a wife*. He was jilted at the last moment, as I am informed by that gossip *par excellence*, Miss Clatter. Be it true, or be it false, it concerns not me. I merely give it as an *on dit*. My husband has no wish, nor have I, to renew our former intimacy with the Temple family. If dear Mary had never brought that professor home with her when she returned from school, and then married him so quickly, there would not have been an estrangement. The marriage, as you know, was strictly private, the family being in mourning. We shared the fate of other friends and neighbors, and were not bidden to the wedding; *this* is the reason *assigned* by Mr. Ruit for his change of feeling; in fact, his dislike of the Temples. I said to

him, 'You deceive yourself. The truth is just this, you are so fully occupied with one dear friend that you have neglected Mrs. Temple, and she has spoken of your frequent calls at 'Vine Cottage.' I will *not* give you his reply to this home thrust. Come to us, dear Laura, as soon as convenient.

"Ever yours,  
"M. R."

"MISS NEVILLE TO MRS. RUIT:

"DEAREST MINNA,—Your letter has filled me with unfeigned delight. I do hope that you will permit me to act a sister's part and assist you in educating your dear little charge. I do desire, also, that you will allow her to pass many weeks with us. You are aware of my fondness for children, and how ardently I have besought mamma to permit me to adopt a little sister. I will drive up to-morrow and pass the day with you, and form plans for Louisa's improvement. Good-by.

"LAURA."

Laura Neville was full of kindly feeling and sympathy. She formed a thousand romantic plans for the advancement of Louisa Monté, who, for the moment, was the heroine of her thoughts. At an early hour on the following day, equipped for driving, Laura entered the parlor, exclaiming, "Mamma, I am ready to go. I shall pass the day with Minna, if you will permit me to do so, but I desire to return home early, and should like papa to go up for me. Will you ask him?"

"Certainly, my love; he will do so."



"A word more, mamma, and I vanish. Will you not give me a nice bit of spongecake for Louisa? Children are easily won by small attentions, and I do wish this little girl to love me almost as much as she will Minna. Were I in the city, what a splendid blue-eyed beauty I would get for her!"

"My dear Laura, pray be rational. Restrain your ecstasy until you have seen the child, then if she equals your anticipations, and you deem it proper, give her cakes and dolls. Suppress your rapture for the present, and report to me on your return this evening, then, if you still desire it, a handsome 'blue-eyed beauty' shall be procured for you to present to your protégée."

"I am quite sure she is a charming little fairy, otherwise she would not be Minna's sister. I shall love her dearly; and I hope *you* will pet her, for my sake, mamma. And I wish you to assist us in educating the little orphan."

Laura then ran off to the carriage, and Mrs. Neville retired to her boudoir to pass some hours in uninterrupted thought. "Alas, poor Minna! my fears were not groundless; she has wrecked her happiness by that unnatural marriage, and shows it by her careworn and altered appearance. There surely is a spectre in her path, and she sees it. Even the recollection of Tape's absurdities has ceased to amuse her. When she thinks herself unnoticed, she has a peculiar far-away look."

"Well do I remember her laughable description of Mr. Tape's last effort to obtain an interview with her, after that emphatic 'Non' sent him by her aunt's advice. By-the-by, the poor 'owl' was at one period in

so terrible a condition, caused by cups taken at the cabaret, or by his wild and unrequited love for Minna, that it was feared he would become a maniac. But he has recovered, and is, according to Miss Clatter, more charming than ever. Minna says, while her aunt was ill, a domestic perceived two individuals sweeping rapidly down the avenue on horseback. Before he could gain the house, through the rear entrance, and reach the front door, Mr. Tape and his sister, Madame D., had by a *coup d'état* taken possession of the reception-room.

"The creature was so infatuated, and so fixed in the belief that he needed only the aid of a female diplomatist to insure him success in wooing, he actually went in search of his sister and induced her to accompany him to the country, in order that she might play the part of mamma to her *orphan brother*. When their names were sent in, Mrs. Ruit excused herself on the plea of being too ill to quit her couch, and the disconsolate couple were forthwith shown the door,—no allusion having been made to Miss Monté. They departed after expressing many regrets, and saying, 'We will call again to pay our respects and inquire after Mrs. Ruit's health.' This they never did, and Madame D. soon returned home, chagrined, doubtless, at her brother's folly and her own credulity."

Mrs. Neville's reveries were interrupted by the announcement of dinner. It was so rarely that Miss Neville went out, unaccompanied by her parents, that the house looked sombre in her absence. After they had dined, Mr. Neville hurried off to Parkgate, feeling assured that Laura would be anxiously expecting him,

as the aspect of things had so changed within a few months, it was rather a bore than a pleasure to her to pass the day with Minna. It saddened Laura's kind heart when she perceived that her friend looked dis-trait and unhappy. On this occasion she had left home buoyed with the hope that happiness was yet in store for Minna; but all joyous visions were to be overshadowed before the close of the day by the dark cloud that was gathering and that became visible to her observant eye.

Mrs. Neville gladly welcomed her daughter in the evening, and felt impatient to hear her report with regard to little Louisa. Laura was not slow in making it; she had scarcely entered the door when she commenced unburdening her griefs.

"Oh, dear mamma, never was I so much disappointed! Such a tall Maypole! Without form or comeliness. It really is abominable! I do wish she had stayed in the West and not come here to darken that unhappy household by her vulgarity. Yes, to crush Minna and to be an everlasting source of vexation to her. I feel convinced that she is envious of Minna's wealth, notwithstanding the pretty speech she made to me when Minna left the room for a few minutes and we were alone in the parlor. She said, 'You are mighty fond of Minna, ain't you?' I replied, 'I love her as I would a sister; she is so amiable, unselfish, and true-hearted.' 'Yes, I think there ain't no more pleasanter girl nowhere than Minna, and now she's mighty rich.'

"What think you, mamma, of her English? And how would it suit your ladyship to have her as an inmate for life? She will ever be an incubus that poor

Minna will be unable to shake off. No sane man would marry such a looking creature as she now is. It is possible that time may do something for her. She no more resembles her sister than a little kitten resembles a wild tiger-cat."

"Well, dear Laura, I have listened patiently to your philippics. I now ask, Shall we order the wax doll? When do you commence giving lessons, and whose grammar will you patronize? Suppose you employ me as a 'turvytop' to do the deportment part of your *protégée's* education?"

"Dancing, indeed! I could as readily imagine a tall tallow candle figuring on the 'light fantastic toe' as that uncouth slab of mortality. And, mamma, I saw that she was endeavoring to ingratiate herself with her sister's husband,—uneducated she is, but by nature she is shrewd, and has discovered Mr. Ruit's weak points, and plays upon them. Just think, mamma, of her saying to me, when she knew that he was within hearing, 'I wish I may ever come across *sich* a chance, after I get my book learning, as Minna did; she has got a prize!'

"When we were dining, Mr. Ruit looked very smilingly at his sister-in-law and helped her to so large a slice of cake that she smirked, and smilingly said, 'You give *sich* great big pieces of cake. I think you would make a right good stepfather. What do you say about it, Minna?' Minna made no reply, but she looked annoyed and unhappy. I think Mr. Ruit was displeased, for he frowned when he addressed her. As I was leaving, Minna pressed my hand with even more warmth than usual, and I saw the unbidden tear trembling in her eye."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

"Withering, withering, all are withering,  
 All of hope's flowers that youth hath nursed,  
 Flowers of love too early blossoming,  
 Buds of ambition too frail to burst."

C. F. HOFFMAN.

TWELVE more months had been registered in the calendar, yet time seemed to have no healing influence on Minna's wretched fate; her husband gave her wealth, but his thoughts and his affections were bestowed elsewhere; the siren seemed to have entwined herself so completely around the man that she had absorbed his very soul. She was so delicate and feminine,—so winning in her little bewitching ways; then she harped ever upon the string that made the music that his soul thirsted for. She sang of undying love, of unfortunate love, of that essence that can only be extracted by a heart that vibrates in unison with the heart from which it draws this perfume. At times, after having indulged in one of these rhapsodies, she would burst out wildly with these words, "He never can be mine! he never can be mine!" Then would follow a fainting fit, and in this way she detained him for hours, soothing and caressing her with the tenderness that words cannot express. Such scenes were not frequent, for she knew the nature of

men so well, she would not risk her influence, lest he might weary of a too oft-told tale.

When a husband openly forsakes the path of rectitude, let his sins be of whatever character they may, what is there for a poor wife to do but lie down and die? It was impossible for Minna not to be aware that her husband's visits to the siren were as regular as those of a lover to his acknowledged *fiancée*. If he omitted calling even for a single day at the Cottage, he was summoned in the evening by a billet, filled with terms of endearment and oaths of undying love. On other occasions, if he failed to appear at his accustomed hour, she would plead illness as an excuse for requesting his immediate presence. She said his absence was insupportable when she was ill herself or saw any member of her family suffering. Unless he were near to cheer her on such trying occasions, she could not bear up with equanimity.

Such honeyed words were as welcome to his ears as delicious nectar would have been to his lips. Her behests were performed with alacrity: neither shower nor sunshine detained him from her side.

How superior to this *intrigante* was the high principled and gentle wife, who, while sacrificing herself on the altar of gratitude, had been guilty of a piece of self-deception of which she had been totally unconscious at the time! When she awoke to this conviction, her course was plain, and it admitted of no deviation. Her marriage vows formed the compass by which she would steer her life bark. Let her wise example be followed by thoughtless worldlings. It is worthy of imitation.

When a wife is crushed and wounded by oft-encountered breakers, the matrimonial sea becomes perilous indeed. If the oppressed has not good sense, as well as a just appreciation of her marriage vows, in attempting to avenge her own wrongs, she often becomes stranded and never reaches a haven of rest.

Even the domestics of Minna's household commented upon her being left alone, and grieved over her pallid cheek, which indicated ill health. This was galling to her pride. The burden was heavy, but it had to be borne. Servants are quick observers, and they read signs with wonderful readiness. In truth, they are admirable guardians, detecting a deviation from propriety in others, while they know how to conceal their own evil deeds.

Leonora had progressed so rapidly towards the goal of her desires that she felt the prize hers and her power fully established.

In laying this unction to her soul she became imperious, and at times exacting in her demands upon the purse as well as upon the caresses of her friend.

Minna was fully alive to the cruel and humiliated position in which she found herself; yet she struggled bravely with her grief, and, like a true wife, hid her sorrows in her own bosom, until concealment began to destroy both her physical and mental powers. It happened that Mr. Ruit was detained one day at home by visitors, consequently he had not made his accustomed call at Vine Cottage. He was in an ill humor, and vented his spleen upon his wife, as a matter of course. The following morning, at an early hour, there was a tap at the door, and a note handed in. Mr. Ruit re-

ceived it, and, after a hasty perusal, he placed the mis-sive, as he supposed, in his vest-pocket. When he had completed his toilet, and left the room, Minna saw it on the floor, picked it up, and being attracted by the peculiar chirography, she unfolded the paper and read as follows:

"DEAR FRIEND,—Will you not allow me to receive lessons on the harp from Mr. Breve? I am weary of the piano. It is so common an instrument, and then *she* thrums on it, which, of course, with your exquisite ear, must be very discordant to you. A weary time it seems to *me* since we parted. There is no brightness in the sun when thou art absent. The darkness of a thousand dark nights shrouds my soul to-day. Come, and come quickly, to your own,

"Ever, and forever,

"LEONORA.

"P.S.—Mamma is quite indisposed, and she wishes to see you on a matter of importance. L."

"Oh, has it reached this point?" cried Minna, in her soul's agony. "Can I be mad, or is it a hideous dream? If it be a dream, when and where will the awakening be? In heaven! There, and only there, can this heavy heart find rest."

While she was soliloquizing, Mr. Ruit returned to the chamber. She handed the letter to him, but made no remark on it. He examined the exterior, and coldly asked, "Why do you give this to me? It is not addressed to me; it is no affair of mine. I know nothing about it." He then quitted the room and slammed

the door behind him. Minna speedily followed to the breakfast-table; while there, neither of them alluded to the contemptible epistle that had planted a thorn in her heart, and had done that which was yet more to be deplored: it had caused Mr. Ruit to be guilty of the sin of deceiving his wife by uttering a palpable falsehood.

## CHAPTER XIX.

"A bird of free and careless wing  
Was I, through many a smiling;  
But caught within the subtle snare,  
I burn, and feebly flutter there."

BYRON.

MINNA had installed herself as Louisa's instructress, but she found her efforts were in vain,—it was time wasted. Not that the girl was deficient in intellect; on the contrary, she was very quick in acquiring knowledge; but it seemed to offend her that Minna should undertake to be her "schoolmistress." She said, "Minna, if I am to be educated, send me to school; you had better attend to your household duties, and not set yourself up as my schoolmistress."

Minna was by no means displeased at the suggestion, and informed Mr. Ruit of what Louisa had said, whereupon he decided to place her without delay in a convent.

Minna thought the arrangement a wise one, as it was possible that the excellent nuns might obtain an influence over this ill-tempered girl. Events were often occurring that rendered Louisa excessively distasteful to her sister as an inmate. By no stretch of fancy could she be deemed attractive in appearance, nevertheless she had managed to insinuate herself

into the good opinion of Mr. Ruit. If the sisters differed in opinion upon any subject of discussion, or there was a manifestation of annoyance on Minna's part at some insolent speech from Louisa, he sided with her instead of espousing the cause of his wife, as any true-hearted and honorable gentleman would have done. Minna often fell into painful reveries, from which, by the power of her will, she would rouse herself and throw off the spirit of unrest, she assuming an air of gayety; but those who knew her well saw the despair she vainly tried to hide.

We have lost sight of Mr. William Temple since the day that the delectable Miss Clatter announced to Mrs. Ruit that he had been jilted by the professor's daughter. We are now enabled to give a correct statement, and will proceed to do so.

On his return home from college, Mr. Temple's sojourn was very brief, notwithstanding the urgent entreaties of his devoted mother. "I thank you, dear mother, but occupation is necessary to my happiness; to the city I must bend my steps and strive to obtain distinction in my profession. Fame shall be my mistress in future. She may be fickle and difficult to win, but I am resolved to succeed." While speaking, there was a hard, stern look, even a frown, upon his face, which was unusual.

In very early life, William Temple's chief attraction had been his open, expressive, and smiling countenance; when he approached manhood, as his features expanded and his mind developed, there was less sweetness, but more intellect, in his face. There never had been until now a shadow on his brow, or an unkind

word between him and his mother. The change in Willie's expression might have passed unnoticed by a casual observer, but Mrs. Temple, with the discerning eye of maternal affection, readily perceived that there was a sad and careworn look about his face, yet she divined not the cause.

When Willie Temple was informed of Minna's marriage, for a short period his indignation was boundless, but his feelings had toned down; he now took an intense interest in her welfare; he was by nature gentle, love and pity had combined to force him to forgive her, since he learned from his mother that "Minna was the picture of despair, and was cruelly treated by her husband." He now felt a deep sympathy for *her*, and an intense hatred for those, whoever they may have been, who so wickedly ventilated the base falsehood that had piqued Minna to such an extent as to cause her to immolate herself on the altar of gratitude, as the world kindly supposed. The world made a great error, as it often does.

On the morning of his departure, William Temple requested his mother to grant him a private interview. She readily assented, and they repaired to the library.

"Mother, I desire to make an inquiry, and beg of you to give me a candid reply. Will you promise to be unsparing, and make me a full statement of the events that transpired during my sojourn at college? By doing this you will relieve me and put my mind more at ease than it has been for a very long and weary time."

"William, do you doubt your mother? Did she ever deceive you?"

"No, mother. Yet at times I doubt the whole

world. I doubt even myself. Were you not aware of my engagement to Minna when I left for New England?"

"I was not, though I suspected there was a mutual attachment. How could I become possessed of your secret when you did not confide it to my keeping? I deeply regretted your want of confidence."

"Pray inform me, what had I done to incur the enmity of any one? It must have been a bitter foe who circulated that unfounded falsehood with regard to a contemplated union between the professor's daughter and your unworthy son. Who was it said I would bring her home when I returned, after having graduated? I'll be avenged! I will, I will, so help me——"

"Hush, hush, my son! Permit me to explain before you register such rash resolves. Ah, most deeply do I regret this sad affair, for your sake as well as on account of poor Minna's wrecked happiness!"

"On, on, mother; my blood is boiling!"

"Well, my dear William, if it *must* be said, it was your poor father who caused all the trouble. Yes, he was the innocent cause of your unhappiness. Do you not remember writing him a letter in which you said, 'Professor —— has a charming daughter and a charming family? The young lady is very lovely; I think she will soon marry.' Your dear father, on reading this passage, said, '*There is a match to suit our Willie; he is so inveterate a bookworm no one could suit him better than the daughter of a professor.*' This remark was made at the table when a number of persons were dining with us. I presume some thought-

less or ill-natured person present repeated the conversation; then a busybody heard of the remark, and in repeating it misrepresented your father's words. This, doubtless, was the foundation of that false and fatal rumor."

"But, madam, why did not you, father, or some other member of the family, put down the slander at once by giving a correct statement of the conversation?"

"Ah, my son! in your own grief you forget the sorrows of your mother! It was but a few weeks from the day that your letter was received that your dear father became ill, and it was, as you are aware, an illness unto death."

"Forgive me, dearest mother, as I now forgive my father. Promise me to call on Minna, and be kind to her for the love you bear me. She is miserable. Should the hour ever come, and it may, when Minna needs a friend, she will find a devoted brother in me. Please repeat my words, and explain the past to her, as you have done to me. At the same time entreat her to try and be happy. Do this for your unhappy son, and we will then bury the past."

William left home, and proceeded to the city, where he resolved to devote his energies to the practice of law, deeming occupation a panacea for ills physical or mental.

## CHAPTER XX.

"I saw thee weep, the big bright tear  
Came o'er that eye of blue,  
And then methought it did appear  
A violet dropping dew."

BYRON.

WHILE Mr. Ruit devoted hours and days to Leonora, regardless of the world's censure, Minna was left to brood over her sorrows and bewail her wretched lot without sympathy, for she had not unburdened her heart even to Laura Neville. Most keenly did her self-love suffer, for she felt that she had over-appreciated her own powers, and found herself incapable of enchaining the erratic affections of her husband. Her torture was excessive when she reflected upon the irrevocable past. Mr. Ruit tied her down to domestic duties when she wished to be basking in the pleasures of travel, and to be caressed as a wife. Her chains were the more galling for the reason that he had indulged her in every whim for the first years of their wedded life. How the human heart sometimes softens under the chastening rod of affliction!

When Minna recalled the sufferings of her dear aunt to mind, she could but acknowledge that her own trials

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were merited, for she had acted contrary to the dictates of judgment when she accepted Mr. Ruit. The poor girl frequently quoted, with much feeling, these touching lines from Lady E. S. Wortley's pen :

"Sorrow is my perpetual guest,  
The constant inmate of my sorrowful breast,  
Joy but an ignis-fatuus light at best,  
Just seen and gone."

Mr. Ruit's heart had become thoroughly corrupted by the wiles and blandishments of the siren. He delighted in distressing his wife by petty insinuations and accusations, that he knew were false and unjust when he uttered them. It was his pleasure to win a heart and then crush it. He could charm a guileless person with more ease than a serpent charms a sparrow. The secret of Mr. Ruit's success was this, he believed in himself, he had faith in no other human being. When he encountered individuals of either sex who rose superior to his preconceived opinion of human nature, they forthwith became distasteful to him, and were pronounced "hypocrites."

Leonora resided in the environs of a village. One day, as Mr. Ruit was taking his accustomed drive, to his astonishment he encountered John Monté. John had become an habitual inebriate, and was at that moment excited, otherwise he would have avoided Mr. Ruit. Both halted, as it were, involuntarily. Some harsh words were exchanged, and then they parted. As Mr. Ruit drove off John called out, "Ruit, I recommend you to look after your wife. William Temple has returned. I warn you in time. Ha, ha!"



From that hour, Mr. Ruit's suspicions being awakened, his bursts of passion were terrific, and of frequent occurrence. How could poor Minna be moderately happy when her path was beset by two such malevolent characters! She often trembled with dismay when the thunder of his rage was hurled at her, and without cause, as far as she knew, for he never had as yet brought a specific charge against her. If she expressed a desire for change of scene and climate, or hinted that she would like to make a visit to her relatives in the West, he became moody and silent, or, which was still more trying, he taunted her with allusions to her dependent condition when he married her. He would ask, "Who is to provide the funds for you to go traveling? Will your beloved grandmother 'shell out' from her stocking hoards? I suppose she is saving dollars to bribe Satan when he takes her home to himself."

To unkind remarks of this order Minna made no reply. After he had emptied the vials of his wrath on her head he would mount his horse, an hour earlier than usual, and canter off to seek consolation and flattery from his adored Leonora. This delightful individual exerted her influence to prevent his affording his wife the much-required, as well as desired, change of climate, and this was done with the amiable motive, nay, the hope, that number *two* would die, and *she* would then come on the stage as number *three* in the Ruit repertoire. How little did Leonora imagine or apprehend the events that were to preclude the possibility of the consummation she so ardently wished for! Up to this period Minna had concealed her sorrow,

but a prolonged silence would not have been meritorious, as she must have died, or lost her reason, had she not confided her griefs to Mrs. Neville.

While making her confession, Mrs. Ruit was nearly convulsed with agony. The heavings of her breast were terrible. Mrs. Neville was deeply grieved at having to witness such agony. It could only be compared to the outbursting of a smouldering volcano. A hemorrhage from the lungs seemed imminent.

The position was painful to Mrs. Neville; she could only express a heartfelt sympathy for her young friend, and the hope that the evil did not exist to the extent apprehended by Minna, and recommended her to be patient and assiduous in her endeavors to please her husband and never to forget "the vows that she made at the matrimonial altar."

At these words, Minna winced a little, and replied, "Why should not I amuse myself in an innocent way? He neglects me."

"Amuse yourself certainly, if you can. If you cannot do it in an innocent way, of course you will prefer solitude. I am convinced that you are too prudent ever to undertake to avenge your own wrongs by having recourse to the sin of retaliation."

They then changed the subject of conversation, and a few moments after were interrupted by Laura, who said, in a nonchalant manner, on her mother's leaving the room, "Have you seen Mr. Temple, Minna, or has he been afraid to present himself at Parkgate?"

"We have met, but not at Parkgate. While I was ill, Mrs. Temple called more than once. I deemed it proper for me to return her civility; therefore I went

over, not dreaming that Mr. Temple was at home. When I reached the house, before I could rap, the door opened, and there I stood face to face with Willie. I presume he had intended passing out to avoid the meeting, but I was there before he had time to make his escape. He turned as white as a sheet, and I trembled from my head to my toes; fortunately, an approaching footstep stimulated us to make an effort at calmness. He invited me in, saw me seated, then withdrew and left the house. I looked through the window and saw him mount and gallop off hastily."

"Well, I am delighted that the meeting you so much dreaded is over, as it will no longer occupy your thoughts. I am also pleased that you behaved so rationally and that there was not a scene on the occasion; though, I must say, Minna, it would have been rather amusing if both of you had fainted. No, I am too fast, you, heroine-like, should have rushed into his arms and fainted."

"Oh, Laura, how wicked you are! I hope Mr. Temple may find a fair lady in the city who will render him as happy as he deserves to be. Fate directed, and wisely, I suppose, that I was not the person intended for him. Mrs. Temple explained his conduct entirely to my satisfaction. It was *not* intended that we should be united. Fate decreed it so."

## CHAPTER XXI.

"O Reason! who shall say what spells renew,  
When least we look for it, thy broken clew?  
Through what small vistas o'er the darkened brain  
Thy intellectual day-beam bursts again."

IT was patent to every eye that Mrs. Ruit was a wretched wife. Miss Clatter said *she* would call at Parkgate and see for herself what was going on. She did so, and reported that Mrs. Ruit was fading like a delicate plant when exposed to the stern blasts of winter,—there was unmistakable symptoms of a pulmonary disease, and she would not be surprised if she were called in as nurse-tender before the end of the year. So much for stepping into her aunt's shoes; retribution will find her, let her hide where she may, and it is nothing more than justice. What right had she to be poking her finger into her aunt's pie and making a fool of Ruit by her winning ways and her pretty face? Patty Clatter would rather be Patty Clatter to the end of the chapter than meddle with other persons' husbands. Yes, that she would, and she cared not who knew it. These remarks were made to Mrs. Berry.

Louisa Monté had completed her education, and was again an inmate at Parkgate; her advent brought no sunshine to her sister's heart, as there was no con-

geniality between them. How could there be, when one was truthful in character and the other deplorably deficient in almost every cardinal virtue? Her fondness for dress and her thirst for wealth seemed to absorb every other thought; there was no pit too deep for her to dive into, provided she could touch gold at the bottom. She had acquired with great facility the rudiments of an English education, and was probably better grounded than many girls whose opportunities for learning had been greater than hers. The nuns had bestowed much pains upon Louisa: their hearts were touched with compassion for the illiterate orphan.

Her heart, however, was incapable of high impulses. Had it been otherwise she would never have degraded herself by becoming the tool of Mr. Ruit. Since his interview with John Monté, Mr. Ruit had become excessively jealous of William Temple, and this feeling was greatly augmented by his learning from Louisa that Mr. Temple had called at Parkgate with his mother one morning during his visit at Vine Cottage, and on another day had been seen walking on the river-bank in order to observe Minna, who was strolling on the opposite side, and it was hinted that he had actually bowed and waved his hat to Mrs. Ruit. These offenses were deemed the more heinous for having occurred while Mr. Ruit was enjoying a *tête-à-tête* with his lovely friend Leonora.

His orders henceforth to Louisa were, that "she must be on guard in his absence, and report every occurrence." Well did she perform his behests, for not a word or a look escaped her vigilant eyes.

Minna's high-toned spirit could ill brook such treatment from those who should have cherished her as they did their own souls. Her heart sickened under such accumulated wrongs. To be conspired against by her own husband, in collusion with her sister, was overpowering. A person endowed with a physique more robust than Minna's could scarcely have coped with the burden that was put upon her, and it was not astonishing that she sank under it.

The confession made by Minna to Mrs. Neville, together with that lady's own observation, had convinced her of the perfidy of Mr. Ruit, and of Louisa's unnatural and ungrateful conduct toward her sister. Yet she was quite unprepared for the astounding information contained in the following letter from Mr. Ruit:

"TO MRS. NEVILLE:

"MY DEAR MADAM,—I have to inform you that on yesterday Minna became demented suddenly, at about eight o'clock A.M. Her attack seems of a violent and obstinate type. It is most likely she will never recover. From the few coherent words that I have been enabled to gain from her at lucid intervals, the madness seems to have been induced by religious excitement, caused by hearing an inflated sermon on Sunday, from the 'Rev. Mr. —,' an ambitious young man, who excites himself in the pulpit in order to produce a sensation, and turn the heads of weak women. I have ever regarded the dark side of the picture of life as my allotted portion, but never had I supposed that Fate, while doing her worst, could weave such a web of woe for an unoffending individual, as I now find

myself entangled in. Even when peering into the dim future, and watching, as I ever am, for the worst that can befall me, has my imagination pictured so dark a cloud as the one that has burst, and in its violence swept everything before it.

"A chosen victim am I. Oh, that I could have descended into the 'Cave of Trophonius' years since! Or, that I could bathe these weary limbs in 'Lethe's stream!' The burden of a crazed wife is a heavy one. I sink under it!

"Pardon me, madam, and believe me,

"Faithfully yours,

"H. RUIT."

The contents of this cold-hearted letter was an immense shock to Mrs. Neville, and the unfeeling and selfish style in which it was written greatly displeased her. She would have hastened to the bedside of the stricken girl, but it was impossible. Uncontrollable circumstances detained her at home, but she received daily bulletins from the physician who treated the case. He was hopeful of a speedy recovery, and recommended that the invalid should be taken to her relatives or to Europe without delay, as the sea-voyage would restore the bodily strength, which was even more exhausted than the mind. The physique invigorated, the entire system would recover tone. This suggestion met with the decided disapproval of Mr. Ruit. He assigned as a reason, that he felt convinced the invalid could not live through the sea-sickness, and the excitement incidental to such a trip would be too much for his wife. Having taken this position, he was immovable. The

physician was compelled to yield, though reluctantly, to his fiat. There was a controlling power in the background that urged Mr. Ruit to maintain his opinion.

When two weeks from the commencement of Minna's attack had passed, Mr. Neville found it convenient for him to go to Parkgate as Mrs. Neville's representative; on arriving there, he found Mr. Ruit leisurely promenading up and down the piazza, holding a volume of Eugene Sue's "Wandering Jew" in his hand.

After they had interchanged the usual greetings, Mr. Neville said he hoped Mrs. Ruit was improving.

"By no manner of means. She grows worse daily. It is a hopeless case; I shall have to add a room to the house and confine her to it; for the remainder of my life I am to be victimized by having the care of a crazy wife. Walk into that room, sir, if you wish to see the wreck." (The room led into Minna's chamber.) Mr. Ruit then resumed his book and his promenade.

When Mr. Neville entered the sick-chamber, the poor young creature was tossing wildly from one side of the bed to the other. On seeing his kind face, she instantly became quiet; on his approaching the bed, she threw her arms around his neck and exclaimed, "Mrs. Neville, Laura!" She spoke not another word, and the ray of reason seemed to pass like the last glimmer of sunlight from a darkened chamber.

While Mr. Neville remained she continued calm, and was evidently gratified and soothed by his tender and sympathizing tones of voice. There was a vacant and dreamy expression about the eyes, as if she were sleeping with open lids. She seemed unconscious of her surroundings, but such, in reality, was not the

case, for she informed Mrs. Neville of facts that proved her case entirely one of physical debility; body and mind were weakened in the same ratio. From the day on which Mr. Neville called, Minna's condition began to improve; as bodily strength returned, her mind recovered its balance, and with health came an ardent desire to see her grandmother; her heart yearned for the friend of her childhood. But that gratification was sternly denied her, Mr. Ruit was as inflexible as stone. No thought or care had he for the promotion of his wife's happiness; but he deluded her with false promises, and with the expectation that the disappointment would cause a relapse, which he well knew would prove fatal in her unnerved state. A power superior to his willed that his machinations should all fail, for his wife's health improved rapidly; one could scarcely have believed it possible that a week could have wrought such a change. At the expiration of that time, Minna was strong enough to drive to Mrs. Neville's to pass the day, previous to her departure (as she fondly supposed) for the sea-coast, where her physician recommended she should be taken for the benefit of sea-bathing.

As Mrs. Neville had not seen Minna during her illness, she very much dreaded the meeting, apprehending that the invalid might be overpowered by the various emotions that would naturally come over her. When Mr. and Mrs. Ruit arrived, they were received by a servant, who conducted Minna to an apartment to disrobe before summoning Mrs. Neville to the reception-room. On hearing that they were in

the house, Mrs. Neville hastened out, desiring to have the meeting over; she was compelled through politeness to stop and exchange a word with Mr. Ruit before she proceeded to the room where Minna was. He said "his wife was buoyed up with the expectation of leaving home on the next day for the sea-side; the idea originated in her unsettled brain, for he had not the slightest intention of taking her, and he begged that Mrs. Neville would be so obliging as to explain to her the impossibility of the move, and disabuse her of the thought in any way she deemed advisable;" he also remarked, "she is still very flighty." This was a piece of trickery which he had recourse to, with the expectation of enlisting Mrs. Neville's sympathies, and inducing her to unite with him in oppressing his wife.

This brief conversation with Mr. Ruit served to change the current of Mrs. Neville's thoughts, and enabled her to meet Minna as smilingly as if no remarkable events had occurred since their last parting. At the first glance, her young friend seemed altered in appearance; an excited manner was natural to Minna, but her cropped hair and sunken cheeks gave her a strange look; to this Mrs. Neville soon became accustomed, as the human eye adapts itself readily to changes from the power of habit.

When the ladies had occupied some hours in discussing the news of the day with Mr. Ruit, they left him to amuse himself with books and newspapers while they retired, lest Minna's strength should be overtaxed. Mrs. Neville induced her young friend to recline, and seated herself near the couch to discuss

the events that had transpired at Parkgate while the mistress was ill. During this discussion, Minna evinced not the slightest degree of flightiness. Mrs. Neville observed her closely and this was her opinion; others might differ from her, but she resolved to maintain her position in opposition to Mr. Ruit or any one else.

In the evening, when the hour of departure arrived, Mrs. Neville invited Minna to pass the night, to which she replied, "Thank you, dear friend, I am compelled to return home now to prepare for leaving in the morning, but I will gladly make you a visit on our return from the sea-shore, if you will permit me to do so then; perhaps by that time you will have received letters from Laura, and be happier than you now are. When we met this morning there was an unnatural sadness on your brow, and I am convinced that you are pining for Laura or for letters from her. How strange it seems that she should have been married during my illness!"

"Laura regretted your absence, dear Minna."

"I am certain of that! I hope she is enjoying the wedding tour, and that Mr. Merryvale will make a model husband."

"Were those your thoughts this morning, Minna? What a little witch you are! Perhaps your surmises are correct. You must consent to pass a week with me now; if anything can cheer me, it will be your society, and I trust in doing so, you will be regaining strength, which you require, to enable you to make the journey to the sea-coast, should your husband find it convenient to give you the benefit of salt bathing."

"I can no longer hesitate," said Minna. "If Mr.

Ruit has no objection I will remain with you, dear Mrs. Neville, and pass a week with much pleasure."

This was precisely what Mr. Ruit desired. So, with the understanding that he would return in a week for his wife, the happy man drove off.

As might be supposed, Mr. Ruit passed many hours of this week at Vine Cottage. Three weeks had elapsed since Mr. Ruit had beheld Leonora. It seemed to both as if an eternity had passed over their heads. She was wild with joy when she perceived that his carriage had stopped at her door, instead of passing, as it had done in the morning. When Mrs. Ruit went by at an early hour, Leonora had vainly endeavored to obtain a view of the invalid, who, by her unlooked-for restoration, was setting all calculation at defiance.

Leonora had sent daily missives to Parkgate during Mrs. Ruit's illness. Most of them are unworthy of being laid before the reader. The one that we now intend offering for public perusal was the exciting cause of Minna's intense mental suffering. Yes, it was *this epistle*, and not Mr. Mr. —'s sermon, that threw her mind temporarily from its balance. The missive was sent to Parkgate by a servant, and purposely left open that the unhappy wife might read it. They knew she was too honorable to break open a sealed letter. Had not this plan been adopted, the arrow would have missed its mark.

"LEONORA FLATTÉ TO H. R.:

"DEAREST ONE,—I feel as if we had parted forever. An entire day of absence is more than I can bear. Oh, what a fate is mine! Dear one, I cannot write

the thoughts that are searing my very soul. You, and you alone, can enter into my feelings, my sufferings, as you suffer with as much intensity as I do. Mine own love, send me a long letter, and pen such thrilling words as those uttered at our last parting. 'Be faithful, and happiness may yet be ours.' Those were your words. I repeat them in my prayers by day and by night. Say again 'that you love me beyond all others.' I feel that you do, yet I love to hear the oft-told tale again and again repeated by those dear lips. With heart, soul, and mind do I love thee, dearest, and this thou knowest full well.

"I am so sad, so weary!

"Eternally thine own

L."

It was beyond a doubt Leonora's letter that caused Minna's illness. This letter was shown by Mrs. Ruit to her friend, and many astounding facts were made known during the week of her sojourn at the Lodge.

All that Minna said proved the absurdity of Mr. Ruit's assertion, when he said she was "flighty." When unburdening her pent-up feelings to Mrs. Neville, Minna protested that she was perfectly conscious of everything that was said or done around her.

"Yes, I felt indignant at Louisa assuming authority over me in his absence. I recollect having said aloud one day, 'Come back, dear Willie.' Louisa noted down my words in pencil, and I saw her hand the slip of paper to *him* when next he entered the room."

"Why, dear Minna, did you utter such imprudent words?"

"For the reason that the mouth spoke from the

abundance of the heart, and I possessed not the power of controlling my words."

"Yours was a sad case; could I have been with you I flatter myself that the attack would have been less violent, and your restoration even more rapid than it was."

"I am convinced that your presence would have saved me from much agony. From the moment that *he* read those words, 'Come back, dear Willie,' he became as spotted as a leopard with rage, and as fierce as a tiger. But for the presence of my faithful Eunice, I believe he would have sprung upon me and strangled the life out of this poor body. As it was, I came near dying of fright; had Mr. Neville not made that timely visit (he called on that very morning) I should have lost my reason. The tyrant tried to bring me to that point by his rigid questioning. He commenced by saying, 'What right have you to be thinking of that conceited fellow Temple? What have you to do with him? You are my wife, I insist upon your replying to my inquiries.' While pronouncing these words, he seized my hand and crushed it so horribly that I felt conscious of shrieking, and then became insensible, for I remember nothing more. Eunice says I was so long unconscious that she became seriously alarmed, and was delighted when she saw Mr. Neville drive up to the front door. When he entered the room, the sight of him calmed me at once. My idea was that I had died, and he had brought me to life. My feelings were ecstatic. He seemed surrounded by a halo, which also encircled me as I threw my arms around his neck. What followed I know not. I was only re-



called to sensibility by the grating of his carriage-wheels on the shell drive. It sounded to me as if it were my death-knell. I expected every moment to be again submitted to torture; and it came quick enough. My friend, you would have wept had you witnessed the struggle it cost me to appear calm when the tyrant came to my bedside and said, with a fiendish look, 'Have you been indulging in more day-dreams about your young friend? Let the fellow cross my threshold again if he dare; he'll meet with something yet more startling than being jilted by that sensible Yankee lady.' I made no reply, but closed my lids and prayed for help from Heaven, and it was granted me."

"Rest now, dear Minna, and resume your narrative when you have been refreshed by a nap and a bath. Your trials were heart-rending, but try to banish the recollection of them. I shall leave you now, dear Minna. By-the-by, here is something that will amuse you, if it does not promote sleep. You are aware of Mr. Tape's fondness for scribbling. He has returned to the city; on the day of his departure he threw an envelope in our carriage: it contained the document I now hand you. He has disposed of his estate, and is in O——, where he has resumed his former occupation, and again assumed the rôle of beau-général. His face was as red as an oak-leaf when touched by frost, and as bright as a full moon. In passing, he made a low obeisance, threw in the document, but spoke not a word. His matrimonial efforts were so unsuccessful that one less self-relying would have become dispirited. Not so with Mr. Tape. Miss Clatter informed me

that he was cheerful, hopeful, and as interesting as ever in conversation. She passed an evening in company with him at Mr. Berry's, and she had a charming time: he gave her several specifics for cholera, and in return she recommended peach-leaves as a sovereign remedy for lock-jaw. This interchange of sentiment, Miss Clatter affirmed, was perfectly delightful. *I think* such kindred spirits should be united."



## HEART MEMORIES.

BY

EDWARD TAPE, ESQ.

“ROMEO.—The brightness of her cheek would shame the stars,  
As daylight doth a lamp; her eye in heaven  
Would through the airy region stream so bright  
That birds would sing, and think it were not night.”

“WHEN the heart *overflows* with sadness, there is no vacuum left for any other emotion to fill; not even gratitude.

“When the heart is crushed, we poor mortals are unable to appreciate any earthly blessing; in fact, we become indifferent to the *boon of life*, and sometimes doubt its being a desirable boon.

“In my speculations with regard to the spirit-land, this thought often presents itself,—‘Is there a corner reserved especially for parents and guardians who thwart their daughters and nieces in affairs of the heart?’ If there is not, Edward Tape would prefer not to be appointed to select the locality. It might be a little too warm. That grand thinker, Adam Smith, judged wisely when he assumed that ‘selfishness is the main regulator of human affairs.’

“There are scenes of the past that are so indelibly impressed upon my mind I intend jotting down a few

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of them, with the hope that they may act as beacons for other orphans who may be in danger of stranding, as I did, on breakers (heart breakers) that are always looming up in the path of roving bachelors.

“On a certain day, the day concerns not the reader, the sky had been overcast and the weather lowering during the forenoon, and, as evening approached, the pent-up clouds emptied torrents of water upon the heads of the discomfited pedestrians. At the hour of nine o'clock P.M. I found myself closing the office-door with a slam, as it had just occurred to me that I should have only a few moments to bestow upon cravat or moustache, if I were to assist in completing the arrangements that were being made on a magnificent scale for a grand ball. It was the first affair of the kind in which I had taken a hand since my return from abroad. I had been traveling in Cuba. My taste was in requisition, consequently my dictum was cheerfully submitted to.

“If the truth be told, I must state that I felt no interest in the approaching sacrifices to Terpsichore other than the amiable desire of rendering my friends happy. I had long been in a state of despair bordering on distraction. Yes, the very soul of Edward Tape had tottered on its pedestal! During the day my thoughts were occupied with office duties, but I indulged myself, during my moonlight rambles, in recalling souvenirs of the past.

“As romance is over and calmness restored, the reader is welcome to my secret, if it be worth accepting. If I am a little prolix, I ask forgiveness.

“A matter of business had called me to the coun-

try, where I established myself temporarily with the view of disposing of my estate, known as 'Lignumvitæ.' It was not long before this sale became an affair of secondary importance, for my grand desire was to dispose of Edward Tape himself; yes, I certainly was in the market! Both Lignumvitæ and its master would have been given most cheerfully in exchange for the cup of tea by which I had been captured; or, possibly, it may have been the little hand, that so bewitchingly offered the cheering beverage, that caused me to surrender.

"The only plan left for me was to endeavor to win the hand. I essayed to do this by praising, pleading, and presenting. My presents were received, but my letters were returned. I am convinced that Miss Monté was not allowed to read them. Had she been permitted, her heart would have responded through the pen, and the pen would have been dipped in the fount from which Eloise gained inspiration.

"Alas, Mr. and Mrs. Ruit intervened between us, and separated hearts that loved! They were influenced by motives of their own; it was selfishness on the part of both. The aunt liked *me* too well herself to be in favor of my marrying her niece, and the uncle was an arch deceiver; his plan was to marry Miss Monté himself, as soon as he could kill off his wife!

"He has succeeded in his plotting, and now see the consequences! My love, my star, my angel is pining and dying of a broken heart! She loved me then, and she loves me yet! Had I not a proof of her preference when she ran away, through timidity, at my approach? If she returned my letters, the inference surely was that she desired to *see me*!

"Those Ruits pretended to take offense at a song that I composed and dedicated to Miss Monté, 'She Loves Another.'

"But I am digressing, and shall now take up the thread of my narrative.

"On the evening of the above-alluded-to ball, while giving the last twirl to my moustache, I exclaimed, 'Edward Tape, my friend, do you throw care to the wind; look around to-night, and select a partner for the evening; then test her heart; if that prove true, make her the guiding star of your life!'

"With thoughts of this nature circulating through my mind, I strode into the dancing-room, which I found perfectly dazzling with gas-lights, bright eyes, and other false jewels. I say *other* false jewels, for the reason that I know the eye to be as false as the jewels we purchase from dishonest venders.

"Let youngsters, who are inexperienced in the ways of the world, and have not traveled abroad, make a note of this and never trust the eye. Oh, that angel Minna! Thou wert truth itself!"

## CHAPTER XXII.

"Let never woman trust  
The oath of man; let never woman hope  
Faith in his tender speeches."

A WEEK at the Lodge, passed in peace, comfort, and so rapidly, that she felt herself ready to buffet with the peculiar and perpetual trials to which she was obliged to submit; unless she could force herself to have recourse to the soul-sickening alternative of divorce. There was nothing left for her to do but to be patient. As to a divorce, she would not for a moment think of it. When a friend suggested that alternative, she said, "*That* is an impossibility! Never will I sever the marriage bond; I selected my path, and follow it I must to the end, come what will!"

On her return to Parkgate, Minna resumed her routine of domestic duties with exemplary patience and resignation. Her views of life had expanded, and her judgment was more profound than it had been previous to her illness. Her self-control was often tested to a painful extent by the ill-conduct of the wretched Louisa, who was a perpetual thorn in her sister's side. In her deportment and in conversation

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the girl was so unladylike, that even the friend who had hitherto been her advocate and ally sickened and wearied of her and her coarse remarks. It was innate, and no earthly power could soften or polish her rugged heart. If her brother-in-law's interest flagged, and her influence waned, she was so acute, and so watchful, that she quickly perceived it; and set her wits to work to recover lost ground. She usually accomplished her wishes by fabricating a story prejudicial to Minna, which quickly brought Mr. Ruit back to his allegiance.

Why are sensible men so easily deceived by designing women, and so blind to the virtues of their gentle wives? Most problems can be solved by diligent study, but this is one that "*Minerva*" herself could not have elucidated.

During those dark days at Parkgate, Mrs. Temple called repeatedly, and by the affectionate interest she evinced for the sufferer, carried out the promise made her son on the day that they had had the explanation with regard to events which, though passed and irrevocable, she feared yet exercised an influence over him.

As her health was now comparatively good, Minna determined to make suitable acknowledgments to Mrs. Temple for the friendly attentions received during her days of suffering.

On a balmy afternoon she availed herself of Mr. Ruit's absence and crossed the river. On gaining the opposite shore, Minna walked leisurely toward the house, which was not remote from the landing; only a narrow strip of wood intervened, through which there ran a serpentine path.

On this short journey she encountered William Temple. His visits to the country were infrequent, consequently it was an unexpected meeting. Mr. Temple's friends represented him as being so fully occupied by professional pursuits as to be precluded from pleasure or amusement of any kind.

Miss Clatter, ever wise in her own conceit and better acquainted with the affairs of others than with her own, declared "that William Temple never had made his maiden speech, and that she knew he devoted his life to reading and reverie." Were we to unfold the truth, we should say Miss Clatter's speculations came nearer being right than they usually were; he *did* pass much time in reading, and many hours in reverie, but he *had* made his maiden speech, and he *was* succeeding in his profession!

When Minna had passed an exceedingly pleasant hour with Mrs. Temple, she repeated her expressions of gratitude for the great kindness she had received, and then took leave. Willie (as we like to call him) accompanied Minna across in the skiff,—it was a sad trial to both, so vividly was the past recalled; but they bravely struggled against an exhibition of their feelings and conversed on general subjects.

A new publication was mentioned by Mr. Temple,—Minna had not seen it. He asked, "May I send it over to you?"

"Certainly, I shall be gratified if you will do so; I rarely see a new publication; our library contains few other than scientific works, that are quite too deep for my comprehension, as I am not philosophical by nature, and prefer works of fancy to the maxims of the an-

cients, or to disquisitions on the volcanoes in the moon, or on the 'Rivers in the Sun.'"

"How would you like to see an aquatic demon rise up now, such as those which appear in the air, and are seen (as thought Zoroaster) in Persia?" said Mr. Temple.

"Defend me from 'water-walkers'! There are demons enough, and some to spare, on terra firma to destroy happiness, without seeking them in the clouds or in the water."

At an early hour on the day after the excursion across the river the promised book was sent to Parkgate, and delivered by Minna's request to her faithful servant Eunice, who conveyed it *privately* to her mistress's hands. Eunice well knew that privacy was necessary, for she was thoroughly initiated with regard to the mysteries connected with this disjointed family, and sided at all times with her mistress, to whom she was deeply devoted. She was well acquainted with the insults that were heaped upon Mrs. Ruit, and execrated the authors of her misery.

By this manoeuvre Minna was placing herself in a dangerous position. It was her first false step! It was her dread of offending him that induced her to hide this, in itself, innocent occurrence. She knew that his wrath would fall heavily upon poor Eunice, and she also knew that his feelings towards herself, if he learned that she had received a book from William Temple, would approximate to those of a hyena when deprived of its prey. For once Louisa's Argus-eyes were closed. The book was received, and in a safe place of deposit before she awoke from her matin nap, which she indulged in until a late hour, much to the

annoyance of Eunice, as it was her duty to give Miss Louisa her breakfast at the hour that best suited the *parasseuse*.

After taking a late breakfast, much to Minna's joy, Louisa appeared, and with her work-basket in hand, announced "that she was going to make a visit." So great was her thirst for gossip that she frequently indulged in it with the servants, and would pass hours in their cabins.

"I am going to pass the morning with old Aunt Polly, and, Minna, you need not expect me back until three o'clock. Eunice can take my luncheon over to the cabin. If you thought less of yourself, and more of others, you would go to see Aunt Polly, and not be petting yourself all the time. I do hate selfishness!"

This reprieve from espionage allowed Minna some hours of quiet enjoyment with her book. It was the calm that precedes a storm.

Louisa usually returned from a visit to the *sables* with her head crammed with superstitions, believed in and practiced by the fetich races only. On the occasion alluded to she came back under great excitement, and ran to her sister's room, exclaiming, "Oh, Minna, do you believe that black faces can be changed into white ones? Aunt Polly says she could make her face as white as a winding-sheet if she were not so much troubled with flesh, which makes her unwieldy!"

"You ask if I believe it. I think it a remarkable inquiry. I believe it as much as I believe that the leopard can change his spots. Pray enlighten me as to the process through which this miracle can be per-

formed. What is the nature of the whitewash? Perhaps I may recommend *you* to try it."

"You need not be satirical, and turn up your nose as high as an elephant's."

"Your comparisons are grand. Please proceed; I am all attention. What is the bleaching process? My curiosity is aroused."

"Aunt Polly says, 'You must get a bit of gristle from the backbone of an old beef. The person who wishes to turn white must chew it hard, and while chewing stand for an hour on his head behind the hall-door, and he will turn as white as a sheep.' Why do you smile? It is true, I am sure. Aunt Polly ought to know."

"Is it? Well, then, I advise *you* to try the experiment; possibly it might bleach stains that are more than skin deep. But I fear yours are too deep, and your case hopeless. Oh, Louisa, how can you be such an idiot as to waste time and thought upon such nonsensical tales?"

This home-thrust from her sister touched Louisa to the quick, hardened as she was in sin and folly; but, like all wicked persons, she was goaded, not to amendment, but to seek revenge. In the afternoon and evening she was more silent, and more watchful than usual, if it were possible to be so, for she was in this regard very faithful to Mr. Ruit, always sleeping, as it were, with one eye open. In appearance, Louisa was never otherwise than oppressively plain, but she was even witchlike and weird-looking as she sat on the portico wrapped in a black silk mantle, with a hood, which was drawn over her head. Her small bead-

black eyes were roving from place to place, showing evidently that the soul was disquieted. She was knitting furiously. Not a lock of hair was to be seen, but a dark-red rose showed just in front, on her forehead, corresponding well with her complexion, which was sunburnt and mottled.

Fortune seems to favor the wicked for a time, but they ever in the end meet a just recompense for their misdeeds. Louisa sat knitting and biding her time. When it was about Mr. Ruit's hour for returning from Vine Cottage, she entered the house, and, with the stealthy step of a cat, went into her sister's room,—there was a book on the sofa, she seized it and turned to the fly-leaf, then softly replaced it, and retired without Minna's knowing that she had been intruded upon.

Ah, thought the spy, now I have her! Yes, she's a great saint, or she sets up for it, to be borrowing books privately from her old sweetheart. I'll sit up awhile and put somebody in a *good humor* by telling what I have seen. He's been very brief in his greetings of late, and wishes to shake me off and to send me back to my *poor relations*. But I am too smart for that. Only let him try that game, if he dare. Were he to attempt it, I would write to John Monté and tell him a thing or two. John would fix Ruit before he knew what we Montés are capable of when we are roused! Ah, there he comes, I hear the wheels of his buggy!

When Mr. Ruit entered the parlor, to his surprise he saw Louisa reclining in the rocking-chair, holding a Bible in her hand. This he knew was done to attract his attention and to vex him; consequently he deter-

mined to pass out without noticing her. She would not allow it, for she arrested him by saying, "A word with you, if you are not in too great a passion. I have something to impart of importance."

"Make haste about it; I am going to my room. It is too late for you to be up."

"Go to *your* room, it will keep until he sends another book, or brings it himself."

"Sends another book! What in the mischief are you at? What do you mean? Come, out with it! To whom do you allude?"

"Oh, never mind; pass on now. There is not a moment to bestow upon any one but your dear Leonora."

"What do you require of me? Speak out."

"Have you got me those gaiter-boots that I asked you for a week ago? Answer me this. And that hat and feathers."

"Child, cease with such nonsense. You can have a dozen pairs if you will be reasonable and explain this mystery."

"Well, she's got a book there from William Temple, and I can't find out how she obtained it without my knowledge."

"Is this strictly true? Tell me a falsehood, and I'll vent my fury upon *your* head! If it be true, let *her* see to it!"

By this time he was pacing up and down more like a mad man than a sane being.

"You may believe what I have said, or disbelieve it, as you please; I am indifferent. But you look under the sofa in her room; I think she secretes her

treasure there. Good-night, and pleasant dreams to you of that dear, delightful Leonora Flatté."

When Louisa retired, Mr. Ruit locked the door and continued his promenade up and down the room like a caged lion,—this he continued for half an hour before he dared trust himself to enter his wife's chamber. He prepared for retiring before he searched for the hidden book. Poor Minna was sleeping in blissful ignorance of the approaching hurricane. Mr. Ruit followed Louisa's instructions, but the book was not under the sofa,—he searched in every nook and cranny, and almost despaired of finding it, but he persevered, and finally discovered what he sought in a large work-basket which held scraps, odds and ends, that were kept for the use of the seamstresses; he replaced the treasure and then betook himself to his pillow. Hours and hours glided by, but neither sleep nor rest could the distracted man obtain until he had relieved his mind by emptying pails of wrath upon his wife's head.

A frightful storm was raging, the loud peals of thunder seemed to chime in accord with the feelings of this terrific man. It rolled over that doomed house as if sweeping it with the besom of destruction. Mr. Ruit heeded it not; in fact, the storm within his own breast was too violent for him to be aware of the one overhead. Louisa became alarmed; she rose, slipped on a *robe de chambre*, lighted her candle, and commenced singing a Methodist hymn on a very high key; this was her habit when annoyed or when she was concocting mischief. On this night balmy sleep visited not her pillow, there was too wakeful a spirit within her misguided heart.

Minna awoke from a feverish dream to find her husband snapping his teeth like a turtle and hissing like a serpent. In surprise, and but half awake, she asked, "What is the matter? Are you ill?"

The sound of her voice seemed to goad him to madness. With a spring he leaped upon the floor, and commenced striding about the room, as if in search of something. He looked and acted as though he were deranged.

Again she asked, "Are you ill? Do tell me,—what is it?"

He replied, with difficulty, "You hypocritical minx! you she-adder! How dare you to pretend to teach religion to my servants one day, and on the next teach them to deceive me, as you do? Where did you see that rascal, and how did you get that book? I shall shoot him as I would a stray puppy, if he comes here! Answer me! where did you get that book?"

"It was lent me on the evening I called at Mrs. Temple's last week."

"You called at Mrs. Temple's, did you? If ever you cross that threshold again, I will be the death of you!"

There was poor Minna in the dead hour of the night in the hands of a madman, and no friend near to rescue her from his frantic grasp.

He roared like a lion, and sprung upon the bed. What he did she never divulged. She fainted, and then, when he supposed her frightened to death, his wrath turned to alarm, and his passion was quelled. As soon as he allowed himself time for reflection, Mr. Ruit felt ashamed of his abominable conduct, and

made his wife solemnly promise never to betray to mortal the horrors of that awful night. His treatment had a most deleterious effect upon Minna; she cast him from her, and gathered up the tendrils of her heart and placed them, with her thoughts, by day and by night, upon a sandy foundation. Yes, she called sophistry to her aid, and persuaded herself that the *lex talionis* was better than the golden rule.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

"Waste not thine orison; despair  
Is mightier than thy pious prayer.  
I would not, if I might, be blessed;  
I want no paradise, but rest."

GIAOUR.

ALL things pass away! It is the fate of earth and earthly things. So it was with the tempest without and the storm within,—both passed. The atmosphere was purified by the lightning, and the poor wife's horizon was brightened, for a time, as her husband, by way of making amends for his barbarity, treated her with rather more consideration than had been his habit of late days. She had lost all faith in him, and all affection for him, and in moments of desperation she felt inclined to defy him and to follow the bent of her inclination. When this dark mood was forced upon her by ill treatment, Minna, half in jest, and half in earnest, expressed opinions so adverse to those cherished by her friend Mrs. Neville, and so contrary to the spirit of Christianity, it became necessary that some one should remonstrate sternly with her. This painful and self-imposed task was assumed by Mrs. Neville purely from the affectionate interest she felt for this unhappy young wife. "Minna," she said, "are we to do evil because others are wicked?"

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Are we to break our marriage vows because others do so and degrade themselves by injuring us? Heaven forbid!"

Minna to these inquiries would reply, as it were in jest, "I consider life, love, and misery as synonymous terms."

"Think as you please, but act wisely, and never for an hour forget your marriage vows."

"But, dear Mrs. Neville, I must have something pleasant to think of. He will not gratify me in any wish. He will not take me from home when my health really is suffering for a change of scene and for amusement, which you are aware young persons, in fact all persons, require. My only happiness consists in recalling pleasant memories of those bright days that can never come again; they were as fleeting as joyous things ever are. I often wonder why my beloved friend Mary Temple has never written me since her marriage. I love her with the fervor of former days. Ah, Fate for me has done her worst!"

"You fixed your own fate, dear, so far as it has been influenced by your marriage; you took the plunge with a full knowledge of what awaited you: blame yourself, dear Minna. If blame rest with any one, you are the culprit. Endeavor to be reconciled to your condition, and try to forget past days. Wisdom dictates that a patient performance of duty should henceforth be your rôle. Mr. Ruit has promised to relieve you of Louisa's presence by sending her to the West; when this thorn in the flesh is removed, I trust that quiet, if not happiness, will again be yours."

"The quiet of despair may be mine! Never, never,

dear friend, will I degrade myself! Though injured by others, they shall not drive me to self-immolation. My thoughts are beyond my control. My *acts* I can answer for, they are subject to my command."

"Be true to yourself, and seek comfort from that never-failing stream, that fountain of living water, the Bible! Be faithful, and trust in Heaven." So spoke Mrs. Neville.

The necessity of informing his sister-in-law that she could no longer remain as an inmate of his house, was an unpleasant one to Mr. Ruit. But though he shrank from it, he knew it must be done; his promise of affording her an opportunity for obtaining an education had been fulfilled. She had remained in the convent as long as she was willing to do so, and now she must go back to the West. After having made this statement to Louisa, he said, "The sum requisite for traveling expenses is ready for you; when the Tempest makes her next trip you will go on her; she will take you to your aunt's door. I shall place you under the especial care of the clerk; he is a married man, and will be kind and attentive to you,—it is a fine, first-class boat."

"As you give me no alternative I have to submit, but it is very hard, under existing circumstances, to be packed off in such haste merely to please that pale face. Why does she not vent her spleen upon Leonora, and have her banished?"

"How wildly you talk!" said Mr. Ruit.

"I am not a dumb beast, and shall talk as I please. You may see the day when you will wish I had no tongue. Will you give me some of these house-ser-

vants to take with me to the West? If I go empty-handed they won't be glad to see me."

"Can I give you some of my house-servants! Have you lost your senses?"

"No, I am perfectly sane, and entirely in earnest, and I could oblige you to do what I desire if I felt disposed to resort to coercion. I bide my time. Mark my words, you will be sorry that you ever saw a Monté before they are done with you! Mark what I say."

Mr. Ruit turned on his heel, and quit the room, muttering, when "Greek meets Greek," etc.

Louisa was supplied with an ample wardrobe by her sister, and when the blessed hour of departure arrived Mr. Ruit handed her a well-filled purse. Louisa's parting injunctions to her sister were truly characteristic of the individual. "Good-by, Minna. Take care of your health, and be sure not to cross the river by moonlight *alone*. Some one might tell tales on you to Mr. Ruit, and probably there might be another thunder-storm, though he roars more like a lion than like thunder. What think you?" Without affording Minna time to reply, she continued giving her parting instructions: "Tell Mr. Blow I shall hope to see him here, or elsewhere, in the fall, and also bid him remember the promise he made the evening we walked in the grove, and I was frightened by the Indian woman, who sprang up, as it seemed, from the earth. She deliberately crossed our path twice, and then asked Mr. Blow 'to cross the palm of her hand with silver, and she would tell our fortunes.' I was so frightened that I ran off, leaving Mr. Blow to make

crosses, or losses, or any thing he wished. I cared not, so that I was safe. She should not see my hand, on *that* I was resolved."

"You were quite right," said Minna, "for it is not a sweet hand, nor could all the perfumes of Arabia sweeten it."

"You think so! Well, good-by; others think differently." Louisa reached the door, then retraced her steps, and returned to Minna, saying, "Excuse me, but I wish to say a word, and allow me to whisper it in your ear. If somebody should pass the gate on horseback, with his head cocked up ever so high, and a fine hat and feathers on it, you take my advice, and set the dogs on him. He can't kill you. Adieu!"

To this insolent speech Minna made no reply, but a sigh of relief escaped from her heart when the door was closed, as she hoped, forever, on her unfeeling sister. Then Minna fell into a reverie, a habit she often indulged in, for she had only her own thoughts to commune with. She mentally exclaimed, "What have I done? What sin have I committed? I have acted conscientiously towards her, as far as my limited power enabled me. I have been liberal, and this is the return. *His* spy, his tool, his slave! Sad and woeful is my lot! Oh, that dear Laura Neville were at home! In her affectionate and sisterly heart I ever find sympathy. I trust Mr. Merryvale makes her as happy as she deserves to be. Had I been in her situation, marriage would not have entered my thoughts for many years later. In my lexicon life, love, and misery are synonymous terms."

The sunshine seemed brighter, the birds sang more

cheerily, the flowers looked gayer, and their fragrance was more delicious than usual, or so thought Minna when she entered the breakfast-room the morning after Louisa's departure, and saw that there was no third cover or chair at the table, and no Louisa to scowl upon her at her own board. On the contrary, she found a charming bouquet, accompanied by a note, from Laura, announcing her arrival at home, and inviting Mr. and Mrs. Ruit to pass the day at the Lodge. Minna threw the note to her husband, and said, "Can you take me down to Mr. Neville's?"

"Not to-day. To-morrow I can do so, as I have to leave home on a matter of business, and shall be absent for several days. I will leave you at the Lodge, and if it will be agreeable to your friends, you can remain with them until I return."

"I will write a line to Laura, and dispatch the messenger. Take your coffee. I shall not be absent more than five minutes."

"MRS. RUIT TO MRS. MERRYVALE:

"I am charmed, dearest Laura, to hear that you are at home once more. You, doubtless, have had a nice time with your husband's relatives. *Entre nous*, I have a horror of in-laws. Many thanks for the invitation to pass the day. Am sorry to say I am unable to accept, but will see you to-morrow, and make a visitation. Mr. Ruit is called from home on business (he says), and he has graciously proffered me permission to this effect: 'If your friends are willing to be troubled with you, I will leave you at the Lodge while I am away from home.' I simply answered, 'There

is no danger of my being *de trop there*.' The truth is just this, he is afraid to leave me at home since Louisa Monté is no longer on guard. Congratulate me, dear Laura. The spy left on the steamer yesterday at 10 o'clock A.M. I thank God for the calm that she left behind!"

"Lovingly yours,

"MINNA."

## CHAPTER XXIV.

"I saw thee smile,—the sapphire's blaze  
Beside thee ceased to shine;  
It could not match the living rays  
That fill'd that glance of thine."

BYRON.

ON the appointed morning Mr. Ruit, according to promise, prepared to take Minna to the Lodge; he was unusually alert, and desirous of getting off at an early hour. When the door closed behind Minna, she felt like the Frenchman, who always locked up his sorrows at home when he went out in search of amusement. She resolved to follow his wise example, enjoy herself with her friends, and chant no threnodies to the past.

On their arrival, Laura was at the door to welcome her friend. The meeting was joyous, as there was no element of discord to mar their happiness; this was more particularly the case after Mr. Ruit drove off for his point of destination. Where he was going, and when to return, seemed a matter of supreme indifference to the ladies,—all seemed to breathe more freely when he had departed. The atmosphere suddenly became rarefied, and none felt greater expansion of spirit than Minna, though she properly refrained from expressing so unwisely a sentiment.

Mrs. Neville was much amused by the Socratic con-

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versation that was carried on for some hours. It was Minna's part to propound, and Laura's to answer questions.

When Mrs. Merryvale had given a full and very pleasing description of the extensive Merryvale family, and related many interesting events that occurred during her excursion, she was silent for a moment, and then exclaimed, "Minna, I was near forgetting rather a memorable incident that occurred as we ascended the river. There was a crowd of passengers, and some exceedingly nice persons, with whom we became intimately acquainted; the most distinguished party was from N—, they were en route for Newport, seeking pleasure and sea-breezes at that delectable place.

"This party consisted chiefly of ladies and children. There were only two gentlemen with them: one was no longer juvenile; he traveled with an extensive retinue—ladies, children, and domestics. The young gentleman was a mere youth, having barely crossed the line that separates boyhood from manhood. Under his charge there were three ladies: grandmother, aunt, and sister. Minna, you would have been amused, as Mr. Merryvale and I were, could you have seen his manly and dignified bearing; he certainly acted the part of paterfamilias to perfection. The ladies of his party were cultivated and attractive; his aunt was pre-eminently so. In appearance, she was handsome and stylish; unpretending and simple in her manners, as well-educated persons usually are. In fact, she was a delightful lady, though she was *un peu passée*. I fell in love with her, or Mr. Merryvale thought so, for he called her 'my sweetheart.'"

"Excuse me," cried Minna, "but I really must ask if she was as 'sweetly pretty' as our good Miss Clatter?"

"Oh, Minna! Shameful! how can you propose such a question? One day, when we had assembled around the table to take seats at the tap of the bell, a man and his wife had placed themselves a chair too high; my sweetheart wished the upper chair, as it was next her party; she politely asked the man, 'Will you oblige me by moving a chair lower, so as to allow me a seat near my friends?' The brutish creature replied, 'No, I won't; and if you attempt to push me out of this place, I will slap your face!' Those immediately around heard his insulting words. The nephew, who sat next me on the opposite side of the table, became desperately excited, and said, in a suppressed tone, not wishing to get up a scene at the table, 'You dare insult my aunt! my knife shall taste your heart's blood!'

"When I heard those words I became alarmed, and retired from the table to my state-room, feeling at the moment inclined to second the young man in doing any deed, however desperate. Mr. Merryvale says there was great excitement among the passengers after I retired,—finally the elderly gentleman quieted his young friend. The rude man was put into 'Coven-try': the captain of the boat did not allow him to sit at table again during the voyage. Can any deny the fact, 'That truth is stranger than fiction'?"

"I deny it, Mrs. Merryvale. It is a traveler's yarn. You surely are romancing; are you not, dear Laura? I do hope so!"

"I assure you, dear Minna, I am in earnest, and I admit there is more truth than poetry in my story. Nevertheless, what I have related did really occur."

"I doubt no longer: dear Laura, your assurance is quite sufficient."

"But, Minna, is it not mortifying to know that there is, or ever was, an American so degraded, so deeply imbued in vulgarity, as to treat a lady with rudeness?"

"Certainly, Laura, all the world would be shocked at a man's being impolite to a lady, unless she happened to be his wife; in that case no one would be astonished, the thing occurs too often for it to cause surprise. You are aware, dear Laura, that most of the lords of creation believe they would be wanting in fealty to 'Adam' were they not to tyrannize over their wives. Yet, ladies are such senseless geese, if they slip the noose and get free, they will run their heads into the halter of matrimony again, and yet again! The only apology that can be offered for them is this, they were so pounded down, so crushed, and humbled during their first captivity, that liberty comes too late to be acceptable, consequently they are reckless, and take the second plunge into the tempestuous sea of wedlock through desperation. There are exceptions, of course."

Mrs. Merryvale deemed it best to change the subject of conversation; it was evident to her quick eye that her friend was recalling unpleasant memories. She asked, "Minna dear, have you forgotten those charming times that we had when you and I were 'buds'?—the winter that you were with us in the hotel at O——."

"I shall never forget those days; they were the brightest of my life."

"It was so delightful to us to sit and observe the airs and graces of the belles. Do you not remember the one who dressed so showily,—we styled her the actress?"

"Certainly I remember her; in my mind's eye she is visible now. She wore a blue scarf around her shoulders at dinner, and I thought the effect positively enchanting. She reminded me of a mermaid on a rock, swayed to and fro by the wind as she glided along, tossing her head, with her soft curls floating gracefully around her face and neck in bewitching dishevelment."

"Your memory is excellent; but pray, Miss Minna, when did you dive so deep as to have seen a mermaid? You are yet romantic. There is so much prose in life, I consider those who indulge in pleasant fancies much to be envied. I have recently heard of the lady who so excited your imagination. She waved her scarf all in vain; no knight as yet has enlisted under her banner. She is traveling, I think, in Miss Clatter's footsteps; though it must be admitted that she is not a gossip, but is an exceedingly amiable person."

"There are some unfortunate ones who might deem hers an enviable condition." This exclamation was followed by a deep sigh.

"Minna, I veto all sighing and groaning," said Mrs. Merryvale, "subscribing only to smiles, and, if it suits you, to a dash of romance, to flavor your

remarks. Have you forgotten papa's favorite quotation from Horace? 'Qui fit, Mæcenæ,' etc."

"Never can I forget it. Laura, I suppose you *prefer* not to remember the day that we laughed so (at the dancing-school) when Tommy Trip and you commenced with the step of the Postillion Polka, while the musician was playing quite a different polka? Of course it was Tommy's want of ear. What say you, Laura?"

"Oh, that horrible little Tommy Trip! Yes, it was his fault. I can prove it. I was thinking of his presumption in asking me to dance without having been introduced. *This* thought so occupied my mind, I was unconscious of the music or anything that was passing. As I was a child, I now suppose he thought it would have been too formal to request an introduction, and had not an idea of what was passing in my mind. I should have acted properly if I had refused him my hand."

"You will act more discreetly next time, will you not, Laura?"

"As your memory is so remarkable, can you inform me, Mrs. Ruit, as to the name of the lady who was dancing beautifully,—whirling just like a teetotum in the waltz with Mr. Albran,—when both slipped, and the gallant gentleman saved the lady from a fall by catching her in his arms?"

"Please excuse me, Laura. I am too old to remember such childish things."

In this unrestrained and pleasant way three days glided swiftly by. On the fourth afternoon Mr. Ruit called and took his wife home.

## CHAPTER XXV.

"For in my way it lies. Stars, hide your fires!  
Let not light see my black and deep desires.  
The eye wink at the hand. Yet let that be,  
Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see."

MACBETH.

WHEN Minna reached home after passing those brief, but delightful, days with her friends at the Lodge, she found that the faithful Eunice had opened the doors, and filled the vases with fresh flowers. Things looked cheerful and homelike. It may have been the reflection from her own mind, which was strengthened and refreshed by her visit. As she was now undisputed mistress, Minna resolved to banish uncharitable thoughts, and to interest herself in gardening and household duties. Mr. Ruit was quite gallant. When they got home, before entering, he culled a splendid La Marque rose, and presented it to his wife. From his bland and amiable deportment Minna concluded that he had arranged satisfactorily the business that called him from home. He did not enlighten her as to the nature of it, or as to where he had been, but he thoughtlessly made an allusion to the crowd in the hotel. She noted this, but refrained from comment, as she knew it would displease him for her to evince, even by a look, that

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he had betrayed himself in a single particular in connection with his secret. Her curiosity was excited by his reticence, and it was gratified the next day most unexpectedly. Mr. Ruit had followed Leonora, by appointment, to the city of O—. That lady fancied herself in ill health, was averse to intrusting her case to a country practitioner, and said, "the attendance of her friend was indispensable." As a matter of course he was docile. The morning was exquisite, or was so deemed by lovers of sunshine, and the air redolent with the delicious perfume of flowers. Minna, with shears in hand, was making her usual visit to the flower-garden, culling bouquets for her vases, when Eunice summoned her to the house, saying, "Miss Clatter is in the reception-room."

When Mrs. Ruit entered, she found her visitor seated in the rocking-chair, and rocking furiously. She looked cross, and must have felt badly, for she was wheezing terribly. After the usual greetings, she said, "I perceive you are yet romantic, Mrs. Ruit; I saw you strolling amid the flowers. You reminded me of 'Love among the roses.' Heigh-ho! 'When I was young, oh, then, oh, then!' But I am in great haste, and must be off."

"Why in haste?" asked Mrs. Ruit, at the same time presenting a beautiful white tea-rose, and remarking, "This rose is from my pet bush. I call it the Willie rose, because it was presented to me by a valued friend, now no more, of that name."

"It really is an exquisite rose; but, Mrs. Ruit, I think the bush should have withered, as your friend is dead."

To this remark Minna made no reply, but again asked, "Why are you in haste? Can you not pass the day?"

"Oh, no, thank you, my dear friend. I merely called to ask what news Mrs. Merryvale brought with regard to church matters? I am going to assist Mrs. Berry in making arrangements for the marriage of Miss Roberta. The fact is just this: I have been informed that the Bishop of V—— has actually admitted a candidate to the diaconry who had been refused ordination by our sublime Bishop P——; and I do, yes, that I do, feel indignant and aggrieved. The candidate was a man that I never expected to find among the prophets. Not that I know anything derogatory to him. 'Tis true, I have heard that he was once very much addicted to waltzing."

"You give yourself an over-deal of trouble, Miss Clatter, about nothing. The two ecclesiastics are in perfect accord. I know the circumstances. There is not a discordant note in the gamut of either."

"I am well satisfied that you are correct; I only desired to sift the matter. Dear Mrs. Ruit, *you* are ever charitable and blind to the faults of others. As to Mr. Ruit, he positively is goodness personified! Where is there another soul so kind as to leave his own darling wife for days and go off to the city to attend to the health of a poor little widow merely for charity's sweet sake! Such disinterested acts are rare, and they must meet their reward here on earth, as well as in those boundless realms of bliss that are now so far beyond our comprehension. Adieu! I must say good-by!"

Miss Clatter accomplished her mission most successfully. She enlightened Mrs. Ruit upon a point that was before dark and inexplicable, and she also threw the poor wife into a chill, which was followed by a fever. Her health had never been robust,—of late days it was even more feeble than usual. The slightest unpleasant excitement or anxiety of mind produced a recurrence of the chills, and the fever was accompanied by a hacking cough, which rendered her friends watchful and anxious; though it was unnoticed by her husband, so fully were his thoughts located in another direction. How dulcet are the notes of the siren, and how easily they beguile a man who is without Christianity or strong moral principle!

Had Mr. Ruit been an unmarried man, Leonora could not have occupied the place in his heart that she now did. She had flattered herself at the time of Mrs. Ruit's distressing illness that she, Leonora, would be the worthy successor of the sufferer, and the time, as she supposed, for the consummation devoutly wished for, was not distant.

In order to show what Leonora's real sentiments were, we shall transcribe a letter of hers addressed to Mr. Ruit, and sent to Parkgate during Minna's illness, and afterwards found by her in a drawer, where it had been carelessly thrown. Leonora's bitterest foe could not have penned an epistle that would have unveiled her character so fully as this did. Retribution of the direst kind must be her portion, when the time comes for her to pass from this world and enter the unknown land.



"LEONORA TO HENRY:

"MY DEAR FRIEND,—I have decided that it is imperative that I should write and inform you of the conversations I hear relative to the madness of that woman, as I am debarred the happiness of seeing you. It is said that you are deceived, and that it is a farce she is enacting; you have probably refused to gratify some caprice, which she is determined to obtain by making you suffer. This is what some say; others think and say she is not mad. But if she really is foolish, they say you are abridging your health and life uselessly by watching over her, instead of placing her, as any reasonable man would, in a mad-house. Her physician is of this opinion. The general impression is, that it is silly on your part to persist in being the keeper of an incurably mad woman. It is considered by the public that religion has caused her to lose her reason (if she has lost it).

"My beloved friend, I have told you what the people say, but you know what is right and what is best, and will do it. If you are going to make yourself old through charity and kindness of heart and with the hope of curing the woman, you are right in waiting awhile before you convey her to a mad-house. The truth is, my dear Henry, I am most anxious with regard to your health, lest it should be sacrificed in this *foolish* affair. I beg, dearest, that you will think of *me*, while all occupied as you are with *her*; remember always that existence is a burden to me without your love. My life is worth nothing, clings to nothing, except to what pleases you. Of this you must feel convinced, therefore, in order to preserve my ex-

istence, you must be aware of the necessity, for my sake, of guarding your own health, strength, and youth. It is a great misfortune, yes, a very great trial, dearest friend, to have a foolish wife; but many others are similarly afflicted, yet none bear it as nobly as you do, and none have so much sympathy from all the world as you have.

"I must now tell you something strange. *I have received* many visitors of late. They all speak of your condition; they pity you and say you merit a better fate. Now, you must not believe that they only say this to flatter and please me. No, they say it everywhere. I pray you watch well and find out if this woman is deceiving you. It is the general belief that you are duped. My health is miserable. How can it be otherwise? Inform me exactly as to your own condition: we must not die. It is necessary that we should live longer. *Au revoir*,—and may it be soon.

"LEONORA."

In the earliest ages of the world, and throughout all periods down to the present, the page of history has been sullied with the names of women who caused the virtuous portions of their sex to blush at the recital of their atrocities.

Leonora's insidious, intriguing, and abominably wicked epistle acted most powerfully on her friend, to the prejudice of his afflicted wife. It was after he had read this letter that he inhumanly tortured her with so many questions and cross questions, that he came very near making a hopeless maniac of her.

And *that* was the end that Leonora desired to achieve. The siren had never possessed wealth, consequently she over-appreciated and craved riches, to the annihilation of every other emotion or thought of her soul. This thirst for worldly pelf she wisely concealed from her dupe. She felt convinced that he would instantly become disenchanted if, in an unguarded moment, she were to show her hand, as his desire in life was to be adored blindly and from disinterested motives. This knowledge enabled her to play upon his weak points, while she guarded well her own sordid proclivities.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

"By the pricking of my thumbs,  
Something wicked this way comes;  
Open locks, whoever knocks!"

MACBETH.

FRAMES that are richly gilded sometimes encompass valueless pictures, and homes that appear to be surrounded by the appliances necessary to render them delightful and are deemed charming by the outside world, too often *shelter* the weary and broken-hearted. We may be domiciled, but it will not be *home* if the heart be not there.

The breakfast-room at Parkgate wore so cheerful an aspect, a stranger on entering it would never have imagined that ennui, and still less that an evil or tyrannical spirit, could dwell in so unclouded an atmosphere.

With the laudable ambition of excelling in whatever she undertook, and believing occupation a panacea for human ills, Mrs. Ruit determined that she would interest herself in the housekeeping department. Her first step in that direction was an attempt at preserving fruit, or giving her personal attention when Eunice was thus occupied. On such thoughts intent one morning, she sat with a book in her hand watching Eunice as she stirred the peaches that were simmering in a porcelain kettle on the fire.

In the midst of this occupation Mr. Ruit came in, accompanied as usual by Petite; he had not taken a chair when a steamboat whistle was heard, the bell rung in front of the house: the combination betokening an arrival.

"What can the boat be stopping here for?" said Mr. Ruit. "I sent no orders to town. Minna, did you order goods or groceries? That whistle is excessively disagreeable."

"Do I ever order goods of any description?"

"You are touchy this morning; I did not intend to offend your ladyship. Come along, Petite, my friend, let us go and reconnoitre." Off the pair of worthies trolled.

Eunice, with the ladle in hand, was in the act of lifting out the preserves, when she let it fall, and exclaimed, in an alarmed tone, "Oh, Miss Minna, she is coming! I knew it; I dreamed of witches last night! What will become of us? Miss Minna, she is striding up to the house just like 'Puss in Boots.'"

And it was not an apparition, for Louisa herself appeared with bag and baggage, and quickly entered the door.

When Mr. Ruit reached the wharf and discovered, as the boat stopped, who was to be landed, he wheeled around and retraced his steps for a short distance, then made a detour and disappeared. He had not courage enough to face his sister-in-law in the presence of so many gaping witnesses; as he was aware that she might act very strangely if the whim took her, or if she felt inclined to annoy him.

Louisa announced herself in very elevated tones

when she presented her ungainly person before her sister.

"How do you do, Minna? Here I am, true to promise. Did you expect me? You had a right to do so; I told you I should return in the fall."

"No, Louisa, you were neither expected nor wished for. Mr. Ruit told you emphatically never to return to this house, when he supplied the means and sent you back to our relatives in the West."

"Well, I know *that*; but who cares for what Henry Ruit says? *I*, for one, do not care a fig for his nonsense. And *you* need not be throwing that pitiful sum up to me; if he had given me a thousand dollars, it would have been nothing more than he should have done. Why not me as well as Leonora Flatté?—he sends her bushels of presents."

"Ask Mr. Ruit if you desire information; he has a right to dispose of his property without consulting *you*, Louisa, or any one else. Now that you are acquainted with this fact, I recommend that you attend to your own affairs, and interfere not with Mr. Ruit's sayings or doings, nor trouble yourself about things in which you have no concern."

"Minna, listen to me: never do you trouble yourself to give me advice, for it is lost, as I shall not follow it. And be not so furious at my advent, I shall not be with you long. I have seen John Monté, and it is arranged that I am to reside with him until our house is ready. Mr. Blow is now preparing to be married, and he will take me home directly after the marriage. It will come off in church."

When Mr. Ruit felt his ruffled spirit sufficiently

calmed to encounter the enemy, he returned to the house. As he walked in, Louisa bounded forward and gave him a cordial embrace before it was possible for him to ward off the attack. Petite was indignant, and would have resented the insult to her master by biting his assailant, but for Eunice's timely interference. Mr. Ruit was the reverse of being gratified by this unexpected show of affection in the presence of his wife; he would have pushed Louisa off, but she was too adroit. After she had made this demonstration, she quietly took a seat; the next moment she turned to Eunice and asked if the key of her room was in the door.

Mr. Ruit did not give the servant time to answer: he said, "What do you mean by this intrusion?—were you not desired never to return to this house again? Yes, I did more, I *forbade you* to darken my doors by your presence."

"And suppose you did, what of that? I told my sister that I should remain here but a few days; I am going by invitation to reside with less wealthy, but truer friends than those I shall leave at Parkgate. I am to reside with my eldest brother; he wishes me to do so until my marriage takes place, and that will be hastened for reasons that concern you not."

"I am gratified by this information; your brother's house is the most proper place for you, and you will find him a suitable companion. Your sister no longer wishes you as an inmate; it seems that you have not rendered yourself acceptable to her, and I recommend that you hasten your departure. On Saturday there will be a conveyance at the door awaiting your pleas-

ure. I hope it is unnecessary, yet I deem it best to remind you, that it will be utterly impossible for us ever to receive you again as an inmate."

"I shall leave on the day that you have thought proper to appoint, but I shall without hesitation return if it suits me to do so." She then ran to her chamber, entered, locked the door, and commenced singing.

On Saturday Louisa Monté rose with the sun, and strolled out in the parterre, to take leave, as she said, of the roses and myrtles, and to cull a nosegay. She carefully prepared the flowers for the journey by wrapping them in cotton wadding. To this was added a coating of moss, and finally she immersed the flowers in a bath, placed them in a stiff paper, and her task was done. This bouquet Louisa prepared as a peace-offering to be taken to her brother's wife. She had a horror of going "empty-handed." She had some misgivings with regard to the reception she would receive, and knowing Mrs. John Monté's passion for flowers, she thought it wise to arm herself with a shield of roses. Louisa was liberal in her way,—i.e. she loved to give gifts at the cost of others. She would say, "Those who like to do so may 'pay the piper;' for my part, I dislike shelling out money, it is so unladylike. Only gentlemen should do such vulgar things as count money."

When Louisa had departed, the house and the atmosphere at Parkgate seemed as sweet and fresh as though a breeze from the "Spice Islands" had come to purify it after a pestilence had passed. Mr. Ruit was rarely at home. The calm lasted a week, and no

longer. At the expiration of that time Minna's efforts at resignation were all shattered by Louisa's unwelcome return.

John Monté had deceived her. He had never intended that Louisa should become a permanent inmate under his roof, but he determined to throw the odium of it upon his wife. *She* protested against such an infliction. She reiterated, "that *own* sisters *rarely* loved each other well enough for them to be happy together, but relations never could occupy the same house without going to war. And she also thought that Louisa's influence and example would be detrimental to the young Montés that were growing up."

Louisa's return to Parkgate, after so short an absence, was appalling. It threw Minna into despair. What plan could she devise to shake off the incubus, which she was convinced would destroy even the shadow of happiness in the house? In bitterness of heart she exclaimed, "What can I do?" Conscience, the truthful monitor, answered, "Nothing. Submit with patience to the infliction, and there must be a termination of your trials when that brave man, Mr. Blow, assumes the matrimonial yoke." "Poor man," thought Minna, "he must have committed an awful sin to be thus punished. I mean, if he is condemned to have Louisa Monté for his wife."

Mr. Ruit said to Minna, "Louisa is here, and here she will have to remain. It is unavoidable, unless you wish to turn your sister out-of-doors."

At first Louisa assumed a penitential air, and never showed her face except at table. Both Mr. and Mrs. Ruit fancied that a change had come over the spirit

of the wayward girl. Minna hoped and believed that her sister had seen the error of her ways, was endeavoring to amend, and by good conduct atone, as far as possible, for past misdemeanors. It was only natural that Minna should indulge such kindly thoughts, when it was so foreign to her nature to be harsh. No penitential thoughts floated through Louisa's turbid and unquiet mind. Her step was as stealthy, and she as treacherous, as a wild cat when preparing to spring upon its prey.

One morning when Mr. Ruit returned home, after having passed several hours with Leonora, to his amazement he found Mr. William Temple ensconced in the reception-room, and alone with Mrs. Ruit. The impulse of the moment was to order the intruder from the house, but on second thought his sense of propriety dictated a different course. In the blandest tones conceivable, he said, on entering, "Ah, Mr. Temple! How do you do, sir? When did you get up from town?"

"I arrived last evening at my mother's."

"You are rather a stranger in the neighborhood," said Mr. Ruit; "but it is presumable that the city at this season of the year affords many attractions and novelties that we denizens of the country are deprived of. Yet we have the advantage in the dog-days."

"With regard to the amusements this winter, there is a fine opera company. They have introduced several new things, but they are indifferent, and I prefer the old répertoire. I am becoming blasé, and care not at all for public amusements. A quiet smoke in my office in the evening suffices for a bachelor like

me. And then it saves one the trouble of making an evening toilet."

"Well, *I* must confess to having a weakness for the opera. Were I possessed of extensive means I would build a private opera-house, and engage a troop to act in it for the amusement of myself and friends."

"It certainly would be luxurious. Yet it would clog after a time, and I am quite certain the actors would become dispirited. They require the excitement of a full and appreciative house to stimulate them to exertion. But I had almost forgotten my mission. I came at the desire of my mother to ask you, Mr. Ruit, to lend her a work on landscape gardening. She is extending the grounds in the rear of the house. Some one has misplaced her gardening-book, and she would like to borrow yours. Probably Mr. Renarde has taken it to 'Singleside,' as improving his grounds has become a hobby with him, as it has with my mother."

"It is an innocent amusement. I think we should all cultivate a taste for flowers. My volume is entirely at Mrs. Temple's service. Walk into the library, sir, possibly there are other works on gardening that Mrs. Temple might like to see."

Mr. Temple rose and advanced toward the library. Mr. Ruit followed him. In passing Minna he pointed over his shoulder to her room. She took the hint, and retired. When Mr. Temple had secured the book he loitered for some minutes, with the hope of seeing Minna again; but of this expectation he was disabused when he saw Mr. Ruit seat himself and assume rather

a defiant manner. Mr. Temple then made his adieux, and left.

He was scarcely out when Mr. Ruit summoned Louisa to the council-chamber, as had been his habit in days gone by. She perceived that he was excessively angry. His nostrils were distended, his lips quivered, his eyelids looked red, as though he had been weeping,—a look habitual to them, but now augmented by excitement and anger.

When Louisa entered the library, she closed the door, and walked very slowly, with folded arms, toward the corner in which Mr. Ruit stood. "Do you wish to speak to me? If so, here I am. Speak quickly, I am in haste. I am writing a letter."

Mr. Ruit regarded Louisa for a moment with an elevated brow, as if scanning every avenue by which he could make himself acquainted with the state of her mind, and discover what she intended by her defiant words and manner. At last he spoke: "How long had that jackanapes been here before I got in?"

"Not long. Not longer than an hour or two. How can I tell, I have no watch?"

Quivering with rage, he demanded, "Why did you not come out and see what he required? You should have done so, and then dismissed the fellow."

"I did not care to see what was going on, for I felt convinced I should see fun enough when you came in." Louisa then retired to her apartment, and returned immediately, holding a paper in her hand, and saying, "Look here, if you will forgive me for not sending *him* off without *her* knowing of his having been here, you shall see this."

He made no reply, but seized the paper. There was one written line, and no more, but that spoke volumes. It was in William Temple's handwriting :

"By the memory of the past, I entreat you to see me one moment."

"Had she refused him admittance?"

"She had. She sent Eunice to the door when he rapped to say, 'She was indisposed, and desired to be excused.'"

"Ah, yes; I comprehend! This precious morceau, speedily effected a restoration to health. Where did you find it?"

"I found it at her chamber door. As she passed in, I presume at your bidding, she dropped the envelope, and I thought *you* could restore it to her just as well, and even more satisfactorily, than I could; for I should have taunted her and laughed at her for having lovers to visit her in your absence *at court* or family council whichever may have been in session this morning."

"You acted wisely. I wish you to be watchful by day and by night. As long as you are a member of my family, I shall expect you to perform this duty. If you are faithful, it will be all right between us, and you can depend upon me in any emergency to befriend you."

"You are very kind when you wish me to act the spy. But I shall be faithful."

Minna's agitation and alarm at the anticipation of the horrors through which she would have to pass, when the guest had left the house, brought on so vio-

lent an attack of coughing that Eunice apprehended a hemorrhage from the lungs, if efficient assistance was not immediately rendered. With this thought, the faithful servant ran out into the hall, and summoned Mr. Ruit. He received the information coolly, and stalked into the chamber with a nonchalant air, at the same time making as much noise as he could with the heels of his boots. Mr. Ruit paid not the slightest regard to his wife's sufferings, but commenced a jovial game at romps with the spaniel, who, as usual, accompanied him into the room.

Poor Minna, meanwhile, was suffering torture from excessive irritation of the lungs, and likewise from the apprehension of hemorrhage.

"Can you not recommend some remedy to soothe this cough? I must die unless speedily relieved!"

"Oh, certainly; here is a cure for your ills of mind and body." He held up the paper that he had received from Louisa. "Would you not like to smother it with kisses? Ah, look as innocent as a snowdrop, but you cannot deceive me!"

"What paper is that? And where did you find it? I presume it is a slip, with a line written in pencil by William Temple. I am sure there is not an offensive word or even a disrespectful one in it. We were school companions, as you well know; he professed a boyish preference for me,—what of it? Does that imply guilt? If there is guilt in that *line*, allow me to hand you this charming, this precious epistle from your adorable friend, 'Leonora Flatté'!"

He clutched the letter that his wife presented, but it so happened that there was neither time for perusal

nor recrimination. As he was opening the document, Eunice entered, with a salver, bearing a letter, which he received and instantly commenced reading:

"TO COL. HENRY RUIT:

"MY DEAR BROTHER,—It is with a feeling of unqualified honor and pleasure that I take up my pen to write you a letter, with the hope that it may find *you*, and those of your household who think so much of you, happy and well. Minna, I know, must be happy, while she is blessed with such a noble, rich husband, as she reported you to be when she was first married, and I doubt not that you grow in grace. May you be blessed in your day and generation! To this prayer many friends would indorse Amen.

"If you do not make objections, God willing, and with his help, I desire to pass the Christmas holidays with you, and by that means become friends with one who stands alone for deeds of liberality to his wife and to her kinsfolks. My best love and respects to my sisters. I hope Louisa makes herself useful; she is a fine, good-hearted girl.

"From yours, here, and I trust hereafter, faithfully,  
"GEORGE MONTÉ."

Mr. Ruit had thrust Leonora's infamous letter slyly in his pocket, and seemed absorbed in reading the letter from George Monté, which had arrived at a most auspicious moment; it acted as oil on troubled waters. The flattery carried healing in its wings. It was both soothing and acceptable to Mr. Ruit; so much so that he looked with leniency upon the *cant*,

which, under other circumstances, would have brought down anathemas loud and deep. Turning to Minna, he asked, "Do you wish that George Monté shall pass the holidays here? If so, write, and tell him to come; he will not interfere with me, and I should like to see him. Read his letter. The boy writes well for one whose opportunities have been so limited as his."

Minna's eyes filled, and, with a swelling heart, she replied, "Thank you; few events could afford me as much pleasure. I will write George immediately, and inform him of what you have said. He was an affectionate and amiable boy. I think you will not find him troublesome."

The anticipated *scene* had been warded off by the timely arrival of George Monté's missive; yet the suspense and agony that Minna had endured, while she was momentarily expecting her husband's wrath to descend upon her with its usual violence, was too much for her fragile frame to encounter without injury,—her health and strength declined daily. As the cough increased, her friends became anxious lest consumption should supervene; and there was just cause for anxiety. Though Mr. Ruit had not given expression to his anger, Minna was fully conscious that he remembered her offense, and full well she knew that, soon or late, she would be submitted to torture before the matter could be finally dismissed from his thoughts. This dread preyed on her mind and caused excessive depression.

But a few weeks of suffering had passed, when Mr. Ruit coolly informed Mrs. Neville, who was making



inquiries with regard to his wife's health, "Madam, it is only a work of time with her,—consumption will take her off in the spring. Her constitution was never robust, and her health has been less vigorous since she returned from boarding-school than it was in childhood. I would rather see a daughter of mine as wild as an Indian, than have her tied up with an assortment of girls like a bunch of fagots."

"I, for one," said Mrs. Neville, "am in favor of domestic education; but there are many admirably conducted boarding-schools in America. You are harsh, and I think your prejudices are too strong and your anathemas too general. One might suppose from your strictures, Mr. Ruit, that you had taken your degree at 'Dotheboys Hall.'"

"Possibly I might have been a better boy had I been disciplined by the immortal 'Squeers.' I am by nature harsh, and require curbing. Probably you have friends, Mrs. Neville, who are in the teaching line; if you have, I cry peccavi!"

"The presumption is, Mr. Ruit," replied Mrs. Neville, "that teachers do not adopt their calling from the love of it, but are driven to the occupation from necessity; consequently they *are* my friends. I have a deep, heartfelt sympathy for, and an exalted opinion of, all such independent and virtuous characters. 'Squeers,' beyond a doubt, was an exception to my rule. If he really existed, he would not be a friend of mine."

## CHAPTER XXVII.

"So he, who seeks a mansion in the sky,  
Must watch his purpose with a steadfast eye:  
That prize belongs to none but the sincere,  
The least obliquity is fatal here."

COWPER.

THE assumed gentleness and reserve did not set well upon Louisa Monté. She soon became weary of the rôle she had selected, and determined to resume her natural demeanor. She no longer confined herself to her own chamber, but circulated about the house, greatly to Minna's vexation, to whom she became every day of her life an increasing source of annoyance. Mr. Ruit was rendered nervous by the apprehension of her making ill-natured remarks with regard to his calls at Vine Cottage. Minna equally dreaded that Louisa might make an untimely allusion to the Temple family, and by so doing, recall William Temple's visit to Mr. Ruit's mind. The servants feared Louisa, as they knew she was unscrupulous, and that her reports to Mr. Ruit were often incorrect. It is ever the fate of the spy, to be dreaded and despised by all the world. When Louisa confined herself closely to her apartment, or passed the morning with "old Polly," who was now unable to leave her house, then, and only then, was Minna comfortable.

It happened one day soon after breakfast that Louisa

vanished, and not a member of the household could conceive of her whereabouts; her gossip, old Polly, was referred to, but she professed utter ignorance. As the day advanced, the anxiety of the family became intense. Minna's sisterly sympathies were all awakened; she dispatched Eunice to the grove, as that had been a favorite resort of Louisa's in years gone by. Eunice quickly returned and reported, "She is not there, and she is not down the well. I looked, but I remembered afterwards that I might have saved myself that trouble, as you said, Miss Minna, that 'truth was at the bottom of the well;' then, *in* course, Miss Lousia will not go there; the place would not suit her taste."

Mr. Ruit said "he would go out with Petite and see if they could not hunt up the wanderer." He returned; the search had been in vain. He then retired to the library to await events, and the affair soon passed from his mind.

Late in the afternoon Miss Louisa came sauntering up the avenue. Minna was sitting with a bit of embroidery and absorbed in thought. When Louisa entered the room in which her sister was she seemed in great glee, and perfectly unconscious of having acted improperly or caused anxiety to any one. She exclaimed, "Oh, Minna, I have had such a nice ride on a scow! The captain invited me to go on board and examine some pianos and other pieces of furniture, and what do you think, Minna, he actually has tombstones for sale! He said 'he knew that we had had Yellow Jack last season on the river, and thought the marble might be acceptable.' I had a nice lunch; the air was so fresh

and pleasant, I thought I would sit there and read the newspapers. Oh, where is Mr. Ruit? The captain requested me to persuade him to purchase some of the furniture, if he does not need a tombstone."

Scarcely had Louisa uttered this sentence when Mr. Ruit came up behind her. The first intimation she had of his presence was his seizing her by the shoulders and shaking her violently. "How dare you," said Mr. Ruit, "go on a flat-boat, to bring disgrace upon my house? I shall confine you to your chamber, and if necessary, straiten you with a jacket!"

With a violent effort she escaped from his grasp and rushed through the hall, from thence into her room, slammed the door furiously and locked it. After she regained breath, Louisa jumped up and seated herself on the edge of a table in the centre of the floor, threw back her garden-hat, and commenced swinging her feet with as much nonchalance as did Rob Roy when the Baillie peered in his face with a lantern, in the Tolbooth o' Glasgow; and though without an audience, her maledictions equaled those of the renowned Helen McGregor's, when she learned that Rob had been taken prisoner by a party of Lennox militia. On the table sat Louisa, rocking her person and swinging her feet, at the same time muttering to her heart's relief, "Yes, I will! I will! Just as sure as the sun shines to-day a cloud shall pass between him and daylight that can never be lifted. He may rest quietly on his pillow to-night, but my time for vengeance will come, and at no distant day!" In this state of mind, and her hair in wild disorder hanging down her back, her eyes rolling, her face red from sunburn and increased

by the stimulus of rage, Louisa could be compared only to a Fury.

Eunice, tinctured with woman's curiosity, peeped in through the window and made a reconnoissance. She then quietly withdrew and reported what she had seen.

"Miss Minna, I do believe that Miss Louisa is almost crazy, she looks so wild and red in the face. I knew something certainly was *gwine* to happen in this blessed house, 'cause I dreamed of witches over again last night, and it is a dream that I does not like, no-how!"

While Louisa was soliloquizing, she was aroused and her thoughts recalled to her surroundings by hearing words of greeting in the hall.

"Walk in, I am very glad to see you, George. You are cold, come into this room where there is a fire; the evenings are becoming cool now. Draw your chair near. You found it chilly on the road, did you not?"

"It was rather windy, but not cold. How are the girls?"

"Louisa is well, but my poor wife is declining; she will be cheered by your arrival, she has long desired to see you."

"It afflicts me to hear what you have said."

"I will step and notify your sisters of your arrival." He first tapped at Louisa's door; when she opened it he said, "George is in the house, come out and see him. I neglected to inform you that your hat arrived by the boat. You said that you wished me to write for it. If the color does not please you, return it to Madame Olympe, she is as amiable as her hats are tasteful."

Mr. Ruit then paused at Minna's chamber door to order off Petite, in tones so elevated as to be heard by George Monté. "Pass, pass! Be quiet, you will disturb your dear mistress!" He then entered the room.

"Minna," he said, "George has arrived; shall he come in? Did the syrup soothe your cough? I have heard of a mixture to-day that must be very valuable; I will send to town for it. Shall I summon Eunice?"

"Yes, please."

"When you are prepared to receive George, send for him. He is now warming at the fire."

In passing out he looked back and said, holding up the finger of one hand, while with the other he held the door knob, "Remember your oath!"

Minna's face flushed and she looked alarmed. He waited until she replied, by moving her head in assent, and then he left. It was quite unnecessary for him to have recalled the memory of that dreadful night,—but "conscience makes cowards of us!"

The meeting between George and his sisters, who scarcely recollected him, so greatly had he changed since their parting, was unsentimental in the extreme. Minna was tremulous, but she concealed her emotion. The other two were as undemonstrative as though ten or more years had not gone by since they had parted in childhood.

Louisa remarked, "How tall and stout you are, George! You must be as strong as 'Hercules'!"

"Well, I hope I have sinew and strength enough to take care of myself, and my sisters likewise, if they get into trouble and need a champion."

"I shall remember your words," said Louisa.

"When are you and Mr. Blow to be married?"

"Ah, that is a secret."

Minna answered, "She does not know, and I think it doubtful if the marriage ever comes off."

"You are ignorant of my affairs, Minna; and I wish you to attend to your own interests, and allow me to speak for myself."

In saying these words, Louisa assumed a dignified air, and turned her back on her sister.

"My dear Louisa," said George, on perceiving that she was so rude and ill-tempered, "you must strive to guard against the influence of the evil eye, and to put faith in the promises of Scripture. When you can do this it will be a matter of indifference whether you have or have not houses and lands, or even a husband! Earth's trials are of faith the test."

"Your words would sound pleasantly to pious people, and I suppose to the sick. You had better preach to *that one*, for Mr. Ruit says, 'she has consumption.'"

"Shame on you, child! Have you no heart?"

"Mr. Ruit may deceive himself, and you also," said Minna. "My fate is in His hands, and my faith is strong."

The arrival of George Monté at Parkgate had a decidedly softening influence on Mr. Ruit, and Minna was soothed and benefited by his companionship. The young Methodist was so quiet, so deferential, and even obsequious to Mr. Ruit, it was quite obvious that he considered his brother-in-law a very great and a very wise man. The incense offered was highly acceptable to that gentleman. It soothed and

softened down many of his asperities, and in this way brought a ray of sunshine to the invalid.

She thought her brother pious and affectionate, therefore his companionship was acceptable to her. In the early days of her married life, Minna would have felt humiliated if she had had to introduce to her friends so unpolished and plainly-educated a man as her brother, but her aspirations now were all of a subdued character. She was grateful for kindness, regardless of the source from whence it came, provided the springs were pure and unsullied.

When the Christmas merry-makings were over, George Monté announced his intention of returning without further delay to the West. This plan was earnestly opposed by Mr. Ruit, but without Minna's knowing it. She, while ardently desirous of having her brother prolong his stay, would not ask him to do so, neither would she request Mr. Ruit to invite him to remain. She preferred that the invitation should emanate from him, without prompting from her. George had managed his *cards*, Methodist as he was, so adroitly, that his presence was not only desired by his brother-in-law, but he volunteered to say, "If George would pass the remainder of the winter at Parkgate, he should lose nothing by so doing, as he would amply compensate him for loss of time, or any injury he might sustain, in the way of business."

This was precisely the point to which George wished to bring Mr. Ruit. After he had taken a day for consideration, he blandly remarked, "I think it my duty to remain, and will do so at any cost to oblige you, sir, for whom I feel such a profound

regard. What care I for worldly pelf in comparison with doing my duty? Nothing. But I am giving way to my feelings. I pray you to pardon me, sir. I do not wish to be obtrusive."

"Oh, certainly, George. I never take offense when it is not intended."

And so George Monté passed the winter at Parkgate. When Mr. Ruit was from home, Louisa and her brother sang Methodist hymns to their heart's content. When the lord of the manor was within doors, silence reigned, as he had been open in denouncing cant, which he considered but a mild term for hypocrisy.

At the opening of spring, Minna's health was still precarious, nevertheless her friends thought, if judiciously treated, it might be restored. Persons of a nervous temperament are sometimes more recuperative than those who appear to possess much more stamina. The twining vine may be swayed safely, though roughly, by the wind that uproots the sturdy oak.

One morning in midspring George announced to his brother-in-law that he thought it his duty to visit John Monté before he went back to the West. He at the same time said, "I have heard, sir, of his ill conduct towards you, and it is doubly my duty to go and endeavor to awaken the sinner to a proper sense of his guilt. If I could effect this, and bring him to repentance, it would cover many of my own shortcomings, though I must say that I hope ingratitude can never be summed up among my sins. Black indeed must be the heart that can forget favors, espe-

cially when they were freely offered in childhood. Ah, dear sir, you must look beyond this world, this fleeting show, for *your* reward. I am alive to the belief that you act from the noble impulses of your nature, and not with the expectation or desire of being remunerated in this world or the next."

"Ah, George, few young persons are as pious and as discriminating as you are. With regard to the visit you spoke of, I say go, but you will be of no benefit to that miscreant. He is the basest, the most contemptible wretch that walks the earth. His very presence is contaminating, though I do not believe, George, my boy, that he can injure you. One of less strength of character, or goodness of heart, might be led astray by his example and his pernicious counsel."

Previous to George Monté's departure on his errand of *mercy*, he held many private discussions with Louisa in her apartment, with closed doors, while Mr. Ruit was driving out, and totally unsuspecting of their unfriendly feeling towards him, or of the burning volcano over which he was suspended, and that might eventually burst out and engulf him.

One morning, just after breakfast, Miss Louisa repaired to her sister's chamber, which she entered without a tap of warning, and much to her delight surprised Minna in tears over a paper, which she hastily concealed under the pillow when she saw Louisa coming in. She was not quick enough, for the wily girl saw and noted the cachement. After loitering some minutes, Louisa slyly abducted the paper and went to the library, where Mr. Ruit sat over a volume of the Decameron, perusing it probably for the fortieth time.

"Here, sir," she cried, "look at this. I told you she was weeping yesterday. I found this under her pillow. It is from her old sweetheart, William Temple. I know the handwriting, though I did not wait to read the letter, as I knew it would interest you, and I never care to read letters that are not intended for me. Persons, you know, will differ. Some are true and some are false."

The reader may possibly recollect the letter that Minna received from William Temple soon after his matriculation at Yale College. The letter contained, as the reader may remember, an avowal of an innocent and ardent affection.

While reading it, Mr. Ruit's cheek blanched with rage; he hissed, he ground his teeth, and muttered, "Yes, that wretch John told the truth for once in his life." So excessive was his agitation that it alarmed his wretched accomplice.

She essayed to quell the spirit that she had raised, by remarks that were as coarse as the lips that uttered them.

"Why do you care?—she is your wife now, if you did come in second best. And John Monté may have deceived you, and told that story merely to vex you; you know it is natural to some persons to like to make mischief. At any rate, she is not such a beauty that you should raise such a fuss about; that sick thing is truly disgusting."

Mr. Ruit scarcely waited to hear her tirade through before he quitted the room, rushed out, jumped into his carriage and drove off. He had barely left the house when Minna discovered that she had been robbed, and knew full well by whom.

Mr. Ruit's non-appearance at home that evening was rather a relief than the reverse, as no doubts were entertained with regard to his whereabouts,—both friends and foes were acquainted with his haunts, so indifferent was he to public opinion. He found solace in the society of a kindred spirit, and was not seen until breakfast the following morning. Mrs. Ruit was then too ill to fear him, or to be aware of his presence.

Eunice guarded her mistress's pillow, and never deserted her post when Mr. Ruit was in the room.

With regard to property, Mr. Ruit felt no anxiety, as there had been an understanding between Minna and himself at the time of their marriage. It was satisfactory to both.

Each made a will: in the event of there being no children born of the marriage, the survivor would heir the estate.

It was known that such wills had been made, as there was no concealment with regard to the matter. The ears of the prying Louisa were ever open, and any information that she gained was imparted to her brothers. While Mr. Ruit believed her entirely devoted to his interests, she was playing a double game. John and George had long known that such instruments had been drawn up, and many a midnight caucus was held by those worthies for the purpose of forming a plan by which they might enforce *their* claims, as heirs, to a *living* man's property. They reasoned thus: "Our sister is in a dying condition, her husband enjoys vigorous health. Here is the rub."

The second week of George's sojourn under John's

roof was devoted to plotting and counterplotting; finally they devised a plan to their liking, and every necessary arrangement was made previous to George's return to Parkgate, where he intended to stay until the closing scene, in order to administer ghostly comfort to his sister.

George wrote to Mr. Ruit to announce his intended return. On the day previous to the arrival of the letter Minna became desperately ill, and it was apprehended that her end was near. Many sorrowing friends gathered around her couch; a clergyman was called to offer prayers for her recovery. She had a slight hemorrhage, but the end was not yet.

Miss Clatter, with her undying thirst for knowledge, called to see what had caused such an alarm in the neighborhood. She affirmed, after seeing Mrs. Ruit, "that it was her opinion the lungs were unjustly blamed and the stomach censurable, as *there* lay the root of the disease." Certain it was that the severity of the attack quickly passed, and Minna was pronounced out of danger.

It was the hour of twilight, and calmness had thrown her mantle over the household. The sun had gone down in a halo, leaving its mellow and golden tints to glorify the west. The domestics, having accomplished their daily duties, had retired to their own cots. Mrs. Ruit rested on her couch, feeling greatly relieved by the healing remedies that had been administered by skillful hands during her recent illness, and she also felt comforted by Miss Clatter's remarks. A rap at the hall door was heard and answered by the ever-watchful Eunice. When she opened it, there

stood the sanctified George Monté with a lady on his arm. She looked alarmed and agitated, and as if afraid to enter; her eyes were distended and wild as she glanced hastily around in every direction, as if in search of some unseen but expected object.

When Eunice opened the door, she started back, awe-stricken by the cadaverous appearance of the woman, who tried to shelter herself under George's protecting wing. He spoke, "Eunice, go and inform your mistress that I am here, and also state that Mrs. Bagby has come to pass a few days, with the hope of rendering herself useful in nursing,—if your mistress still needs watchers."

When she had shown the guests to the library, Eunice retired, muttering, "She does not require nothing of the kind, she don't want no hags. I knew she was coming, for I dreamed of witches again last night."

This arrival was a surprise to Minna, as Mrs. Bagby had never entered Mr. Ruit's doors since she treacherously repeated his words of warning to John Monté. Minna cordially welcomed her brother and Mrs. Bagby. She was rendered nervous by the fear that her husband would be displeased and consequently rude to Mrs. Bagby.

Fortunately he returned home in a bland humor, and received George warmly and Mrs. Bagby politely. In his own house Mr. Ruit could not have acted otherwise than hospitably,—it was his nature to be so. Beside, he was evidently softened by the prospect, as he thought, of a speedy release from the galling bonds of matrimony.

A few years back, how different would have been his

feelings! Mr. Ruit felt conscious that he had injured his wife, and for that reason he disliked the poor girl who had confided her happiness to his keeping, and relinquished every earthly hope through a feeling of gratitude, and with the insane belief (taught her by him) that *his peace*, yes, his existence, depended upon a union with her.

Mr. Ruit's was a peculiar case: had he acted differently it would have been contrary to logic; he was devoid of faith in the sublime tenets of the Christian religion, and deemed those hypocrites who did not acknowledge themselves of his way of thinking. He said, "They were deficient in moral courage, and untrue to themselves and their reason."

The family, excepting Louisa, passed the evening of George Monté's return in Minna's chamber. Louisa came in for a moment to greet her brother and Mrs. Bagby, but quickly returned to her room, excusing herself on the plea of having a headache. Mrs. Bagby retired early,—health and spirits seemed to have deserted her.

When the party dispersed for the night, George stopped at Louisa's room; he entered and closed the door. He had scarcely done so when she asked, "Is he coming to-morrow, and will he do what he promised? I fear he will be faint-hearted."

"He will come, and he will not show the white feather. But do *you* keep clear of trouble,—be sick in bed to-morrow. Mind what I say: do not leave your bed."

"Never do you fear me. I'll take splendid care of myself. But, George, say, do you think *she'll* follow him right away and leave the coast clear?"

"Hush, child, you talk too much. How is your head? Good-night. Sing another hymn."

After leaving Louisa, George encountered Mr. Ruit in the hall, and remarked in passing, "My sister is a good girl. I think her pious."

"She may be, *but* you do not understand the human heart as thoroughly, George, as I do. Allow me to advise you, my friend, not to judge others always by yourself,—very few mortals are blessed with a heart so grateful and affectionate as yours. Good-night. A quiet conscience brings sweet repose. You must sleep well?"

"I usually make one nap of the night. Thank you kindly, dear sir, for having so good an opinion of me, poor sinner as I feel myself to be."

With another "good-night" they parted.

"What an unmitigated specimen of the genus egotist is that blockhead, with a load of useless learning in his head! I wonder where he thinks I have lived and how been occupied all my lifetime, that I should not know a hypocrite when *I* meet one? Ugh! giving me advice, indeed! We'll soon see who is the man of experience and who is the dupe. He'll rue the day that a Monté ever crossed his path! I watched the tracks of his carriage-wheels the last evening before I left here, and I saw that he had been to his Leonora's. A double-dyed villain! And he has actually thrown out hints to me against Louisa! Yes, sir, you do know a great deal more of her than you had an honest right to acquire; gliding about at all hours of the night, like a deadly serpent, seeking whom you may victimize. As to the wretched Louisa, we'll just make a



cat's-paw of her. She is wicked by nature and by education. We can cut her off with promises, and if troublesome, put her in a convent. John has pluck and will carry out our plans like a fine fellow as he is. I know he is trustworthy, for the *reason* that it is to his *interest* to be true." After this soliloquy, George retired to rest.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

"And such a yell was there  
Of sudden and portentous birth,  
As if men fought upon the earth  
And fiends in upper air."

MARMION.

THE morning was fresh and delightful, with a delicious southerly breeze, which prevented the lassitude that is usually felt on the commencement of summer. The trees and the grass were decked in dresses of brightest emerald hue. Roses and other flowers perfumed the air with their exquisite odors. All nature wore a contented mien. Even Minet and Petite appeared to have signed a treaty prohibiting barking and scratching, growling and fighting; there they were on the front portico, sleeping cosily side by side, as lovingly as a pair of young cooing doves.

In this seemingly peaceful atmosphere there prowled an invisible and wicked spirit, stimulating men to the committal of horrible deeds. A tragedy was to be enacted of so black a hue, it would stagger the faith even of the philanthropist in his fellow-man.

At that season of the year it was the custom with the family at Parkgate to drive in the cool of the evening. Minna had not been out for a long time, but

Mr. Ruit drove invariably, unless prevented by heavy showers. Driving seemed to have grown into a passion with him.

On this day, after dinner, Mr. Ruit, before leaving for his drive, stopped in his wife's room longer than he usually did,—he seemed depressed, and was much softer in his manner to her than he had been of late days. When he first entered, he busied himself in arranging her pillows, felt her pulse, then drew up a chair, and sat for some moments without speaking.

Then he remarked, "How extremely amiable and obliging George Monté is! I took him out with me this morning in my buggy. I wished to alight for a moment to speak to a person on business. Before I was aware of his intention, George jumped out and opened the gate, as cheerfully as if he had been a footman. Would that there were more of his stripe in this wicked world!"

He sat some time longer, and on leaving the room, closed the door gently behind him. Alas! it was their final parting!

When many days had passed, and Minna's mind was in a measure restored to equanimity, in recalling his words, and his sad expression, in making those parting remarks, she could but think that he had had a premonition of coming events. She shed many tears at the retrospect, forgetting and forgiving the torture, the humiliation, he had inflicted upon her.

It was scarcely an hour after Mr. Ruit's departure from the house, when his wife was startled by the abrupt entrance of John Monté. He came into her presence without ceremony; approached the bed,

offered his hand, and said, "I heard you were about to die, and I have come to take leave of you."

"You have erred in doing so. My husband will resent this intrusion. I beg that you will quit the house instantly! My brother, I forgive you the wrong that you did me; change your course of life, and I trust we may meet in a brighter world than this, where we will be reunited to our beloved parents."

Not a word more would she utter. John was in such a rage at her reticence that he retired from the room, and soon after from the house. George accompanied him to his ruin. Oh, that they could have been then arrested by a holy and beneficent angel of mercy! Or if their souls were so darkened with guilt as to have passed beyond the pale of a merciful interference, could their feet have been tripped up, their limbs dislocated, or even their necks been broken, it would have been better for them than the committal of the fratricidal deed, which brought down destruction upon themselves as surely as it did upon their victim. Education in John's case had fallen far short in performing its mission; possibly, he might have been a better man had he not been left to run wild in the West.

The conspirators secreted themselves in a dense wood, known as "the grove." In this wood there remained fragments of a ruin, which was supposed to have sheltered Lafitte and his band of buccaneers in years gone by, when they visited this region with impunity. If travelers advanced from below, they had to pass through the grove in order to reach the house,—the drive was serpentine and picturesque. At the last turn the brothers ambuscaded, to await the advent

of their victim. They allowed him to pass through to the edge of the wood; just as the carriage emerged beyond the obstructing trees, three pistol reports were heard at the dwelling, then for a minute there was silence, which in the next moment was broken by the most unearthly shrieks and yells, that were bellowed forth by the domestics, while they were running in every direction, perfectly crazed with dismay. Notwithstanding the excitement without, as yet quiet reigned within-doors. In the midst of it George rushed into the room where Minna sat, exclaiming, "John is lost forever! He has murdered Mr. Ruit!"

On hearing his words, the invalid, with supernatural strength, sprang from her couch, threw up her arms wildly, and shrieked out, "Can it be true?" She then fell senseless and apparently lifeless to the floor. Eunice was near; she gently lifted her mistress and placed her in bed.

The scene was appalling. On the ground lay the bloody corpse, a crowd of domestics had gathered around it, some held torches while others wrung their hands; *their* shrieks, combined with the barking and howling of the dogs, produced sounds so terrific that the neighbors were alarmed and many were speedily on the spot; in an incredibly short time the house and grounds were filled with sympathizing friends.

The murderers were temporarily lost sight of, as all were bewildered by the enormity of the deed, and every thought engrossed with the dead. John Monté had made a hasty retreat; the fearless George circulated about the house and grounds, awaiting events that might occur and deeming himself *innocent*, inas-

much as that he had testified against his brother. In this opinion he was *not* sustained by the public.

The family physician was summoned immediately. As his residence was not remote from Parkgate, it was not long before he reached Mrs. Ruit's bedside. He found her cold and hovering on the brink of eternity; she continued in that condition during the night,—towards sunrise her pulse became more active, and the immediate danger of her dying had passed. That she lived through that awful night was truly astonishing. It proved that there was more vitality in her system than had been supposed.

There were many who deplored Mr. Ruit's sad fate, for there were some estimable traits in his character. To the poor he was liberal and open-handed, and he bestowed hospitality unstintedly upon all who needed it; but, unfortunately, acts of munificence when greatly outnumbered by deeds of evil, are unavailing in bringing peace on earth or happiness in the spirit-land.

Mr. Ruit had devoted many years of his life to the study of nature and the natural sciences; in truth, his aim was to be considered a philosopher.

If that profound and original thinker, De Quincey, was correct, Mr. Ruit's death by assassination may be advanced as evidence that he was a philosopher. De Quincey says, "Every philosopher of eminence for the two last centuries has been murdered, or been very near it; insomuch that if a man calls himself a philosopher, and never had his life attempted, rest assured there is nothing in him." We think the deduction conclusive, and that the departed may be ranked among the philosophers of the present century.

His path in life was not devoid of thorns, the sins of his predecessors weighed heavily upon him,—the knowledge of having a blot on his escutcheon had from his youth up made him suspicious and misanthropic. Many dark and horrible deeds had been perpetrated in that old house at Parkgate. It was before our day, in long years gone by,—we will not pry into the Ruit mysteries, but drop the curtain and cover all with the mantle of charity.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

"True charity, a plant divinely nurs'd,  
Fed by the love from which it rose at first,  
Thrives against hope, and in the rudest scene  
Storms but enliven its unfading green.

COWPER.

FOR many days subsequent to the catastrophe recorded in our last chapter Mrs. Ruit retired within the solitary chambers of her soul, and would lie with closed lids for hours without speaking. To her friend Mrs. Neville she sometimes poured out the sorrows of an overburdened heart, finding in her sympathy greatest relief and comfort.

Mrs. Merryvale residing in a distant parish, her domestic duties rendered an attendance upon her friend impossible, but she employed her ready pen to convey words of sympathy and affection to her beloved Minna. When the Ruits were married, Laura had regarded her friend as sacrificed. Had Mr. Ruit died a peaceful, natural death in his bed, Laura would have esteemed his departure a relief. Her own husband being totally free from the defects of character that were glaring in Mr. Ruit, and the kindness and tenderness that Mr. Neville ever bestowed upon his dear ones, rendered Mrs. Merryvale's experiences in life quite contrary to poor Minna's; for this reason she felt a loathing for the murdered man, while she re-

gretted his tragical end and abhorred the reprobates. With these feelings, Mrs. Merryvale found some difficulty in penning the following letter of condolence to her friend.

"To MRS. RUIT:

"MY DEAR MINNA,—I find myself at a loss for words to express the emotions that fill my heart at this moment. Mamma's letter has just come to hand, in which she gives the overwhelming, the soul-sickening information and particulars of the horrible affair. The awful catastrophe! Murdered! murdered! And by those who had eaten of his bread! Sent to eternity without even a moment's lease to offer up a prayer. It cannot be true, I must be wandering in a dream, and one more terrible than any ever before dreamed.

"Those wretched perpetrators, what agony, what remorse, must be theirs! It was only casting lots for the first death, for they, without doubt, will suffer the penalty so richly deserved.

"Pardon me, beloved Minna, for this outpouring from my selfish heart. I should be thinking of you, and forget that which is irrevocable. Would that I were near your pillow, that I might comfort and soothe you under this complication of woe!

"Pray do not yield to bitter retrospections, but endeavor to remember *his* virtues, and cast the veil of oblivion over his transgressions. I do not say that you can forget his faults, but ask for leniency towards them, and I am convinced that you are more willing to bestow it than I am to make the request. You have been a dutiful wife, and this reflection must be

very consoling. The duty of forgiving and forgetting injuries is one that the heart writhes against; nevertheless, those who hope for mercy must themselves be merciful.

"I can scarcely dare to trust myself to allude again to the accused, as I know that you are unable at present to think of them. I will only express the ardent wish that they may be allowed time for repentance, and that they may be forgiven before they are launched into eternity.

"Adieu, dearest Minna!

"Yours truly,

"LAURA."

## CHAPTER XXX.

Meantime I seek no sympathies, nor need;  
 The thorns which I have reap'd are of the tree  
 I planted; they have torn me, and I bleed:  
 I should have known what fruit would spring from such a  
 seed.

ON the day previous to the memorable one on which Mr. Ruit was murdered, Mr. William Temple had arrived in the neighborhood to attend a gathering of the clan,—customary on the celebration of his mother's birthday.

Just after sunset Mr. Temple left the house and strolled down to the river, to enjoy the refreshing breeze that had sprung up from the east. As he walked leisurely along in deep thought, his attention was attracted by a skiff that was tied up on the shore. The impulse to jump in was no sooner felt than indulged,—a row by moonlight would vary the amusements of the evening, so off he pushed. While thus occupied, his attention was arrested by hearing cries and heart-rending screams, that he discerned, on listening attentively, to emanate from Parkgate. In an instant his soul was filled with despair. "She is dead! What other cause could produce such grief? Oh, that I could have pressed her to this aching heart! Even now my grief might win her back to life. No, no, it cannot be! Ah, that look of terror when she saw

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him coming on the last morning, when I called to borrow the work on gardening! That look can never be forgotten. But this is not the time for indulging thought. I must act!" With a swift pull he gained the opposite shore, bounded up the bank, and was the first outsider who reached the bloody scene.

The domestics were howling, wringing their hands, and crying out for vengeance to the full extent of their strength. The noise and confusion rendered it impossible to make inquiries with regard to the perpetration of the foul deed. Mr. Temple assisted in the removal of the body to the house, and then dispatched messengers to inform Mrs. Ruit's intimate friends of the shocking occurrence. He remained in the house until the arrival of those to whom he deemed it safe to consign the invalid. He did not enter Minna's chamber; nor did he desire to do so. He felt that *she must die*. He only waited to hear that she was receiving the most affectionate attention that friends could bestow. When he felt assured on this point, he left the house and returned to his mother's, and at an early hour next morning returned to the city of O——, to resume his professional labors. His heart had become almost petrified and indifferent to life. Without being aware of the feeling, William Temple had cherished hope while Minna lived; now hope had fled, as he supposed she must die, and he was wretched and reckless. Few have ever loved as he loved.

True to George Monté's instructions, Louisa remained in her room all day, suffering, as she said, "from headache." When the pistol-shooting was heard, she betrayed her knowledge of what was to

occur, and of that which had taken place, by peeping out and saying to a passing servant, "Is he dead, or merely wounded? I hope they will lay him out in the grove; there is a nice place in the ruins for the purpose, and I do not wish him here."

John Monté surrendered to the authorities. He spoke with great coolness of his crime, said "he had acted from a sense of duty." George, to his amazement, was arrested and imprisoned with his brother, his complicity having been proved beyond a peradventure.

The trial was fixed for an early day. When the morning arrived, the weather was as variable as public opinion. Sunshine and showers alternated during the forenoon; later in the day the sunshine held undisputed sway. The friends on one side cried out "vengeance," while those who were in favor of the Montés said "they had committed a justifiable homicide." Mr. Ruit had some very warm friends of his own class, and was exceedingly popular with the masses, consequent upon his liberality to the poor. *They* protested that it was a dastardly, cold-blooded, mercenary murder! The excitement was intense, and many conflicting opinions were expressed.

It sufficeth for us to state that the brothers were released. Some persons supposed that Louisa's testimony carried great weight with the court. Her communication was made to the judge in private, and was by him made known to the jury. To all others he was strictly reticent, and impressed upon the jurymen the propriety of *their* being equally so. Let us drop the curtain!

Mrs. Ruit passed through the trying ordeal and bore her complicated afflictions with a patient fortitude that was truly remarkable. Her sensations, on the day that her brothers were brought to trial, were of too mingled a character to be described. She had long since lost respect and affection for her husband, and her ties of consanguinity were very strong, yet her sense of right and wrong was even stronger, therefore we know that she desired none other than a righteous judgment. But her sentiments were not expressed, she garnered them up within her own bosom and divulged them to no human being.

When Louisa Monté returned home after the trial was over, she rushed into Minna's room in great glee, exclaiming, "I said I would, and I did it! My brothers are acquitted. I think we will all go to South America to live. Minna, you have cried enough. If you were to get up and dress for dinner it would be much more sensible than lying there, making your eyes as red as ferrets' and your nose as red as a rose."

To this unfeeling speech Minna made no response, and was gratified when the wretchedly unrefined girl was summoned to the dining-room. Louisa never felt happier than when seated at table enjoying a nice dinner.

The conspirators were grievously disappointed, for they did not obtain the pelf for which they periled both soul and body. Mrs. Ruit survived to the astonishment of every one, even her physicians were nonplused. For some weeks after the trial of the Montés, there was a contest between youth and vitality against *disease*, which proved to have pro-

ceeded more from mental than from physical causes. A skilled physician was called, and every effort made to restore, if possible, the flickering spark of life which seemed just ready to go out. Nature, kindness, and faithful nursing prevailed. The physician made a thorough examination of the case,—he discovered that the cough proceeded from the liver, and not from the lungs, as had been supposed.

It was decided that a change of scene and of climate would restore the invalid. Those who felt a deep interest in her well-being, advised her to pass a year in the West with the friends of her childhood. As her beloved grandmother was yet living, Minna joyously adopted the plan suggested. She placed her property and business of every description in the hands of a judicious friend, and by so doing relieved her mind from anxiety with regard to pecuniary matters. Under such circumstances, how blessed are those who have a strong arm to lean upon!

With her usual thoughtfulness, Minna wished to make some definite and final arrangements for Louisa's future before she could think of herself or determine upon her own plans. With these kindly thoughts, she sought an interview with Mr. Blow. He gladly responded to her summons, and hastened to Parkgate. The interview was highly satisfactory, and Mrs. Ruit's recommendations and desires were thankfully acceded to. On leaving the library where the interview had taken place, Mr. Blow was seen scanning a paper which he carefully placed in his pocket-book before he entered the reception-room where he expected to find Louisa. For some time past he had shunned her,

but things had now assumed quite a different aspect. When Louisa heard that Mr. Blow was approaching the house, she said, "Indeed, coming, is he? I am half inclined to run away and not see him to-day. I dislike such lukewarm lovers, but these are ticklish times, I may never have another offer. Who would like to follow in Miss Clatter's footsteps? Poor old soul, she is not a very lovable object,—she says 'men are as heartless as crabs,' and I agree with her."

Mr. Blow's reception was more cordial than he had supposed it would be, no allusion was made to unpleasant subjects by either,—his overtures were accepted, and their former relations re-established. It was arranged that they would be married on the 10th of June and leave for New York, where the Monté brothers would join them and the entire party would emigrate to California. The plan was pleasing and satisfactory to Mrs. Ruit, and was carried into effect at the time appointed. Louisa was provided with a suitable outfit, and seemed satisfied with the number and the color of her dresses. We may indulge the hope that the party profited by the experience they had so dearly gained, and that they will establish more enviable reputations in their new home than they left in the old. While expressing this hope, we bid them *beware!* If retribution comes slowly, it comes surely.

The sun shone with such brilliancy that it was perfectly dazzling, and exposure to its rays after the early hours of morning was utterly unendurable.

It was on a morning in early July that Mrs. Ruit and her faithful Eunice were to embark on a steamboat for the West. Many friends had assembled to say



"good-by." Mr. Temple was the last who drove up; he approached her with timidity, fearing to recall horrible reminiscences to her mind. But Minna had long since learned self-control, and the lesson had been acquired by severe teachings. By her calm demeanor, one would have judged that she had forgotten all the horrors of the past, and that she was occupied only with pleasurable anticipations at the prospect of embracing her aged grandmother and meeting the friends of her childhood. When Mr. Temple advanced and offered his hand, he was received kindly. The only indication of emotion evinced by Minna was the mantling blush which suffused her cheek.

The voyage up the river was made with speed and safety; the invalid acquired strength rapidly. On her arrival, there were many warm hearts ready to welcome the wanderer to her old home. The icy rim around her heart was quickly dissolved by their kindness.

The meeting between the venerable Mrs. Monté and her beloved granddaughter was both touching and painful. Minna sank into the arms that were outstretched to receive her, and exclaimed, "Oh, dear grandmother, I have found rest at last!" The old lady carefully abstained from making any allusions to Mr. Ruit's death, or to his treatment of any member of her family. Her delicacy was most gratefully appreciated by Minna. Any remarks would only have tended to open anew the yet unhealed wounds of the sufferer.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

"Oh! there are looks and tones that dart  
An instant sunshine through the heart,  
As if the soul that minute caught  
Some treasure it through life had sought."

T. MOORE.

MINNA'S spirit had been so crushed by the sorrow and humiliation that had been heaped upon her, it required the healing influences of time to restore her natural elasticity and buoyancy. Every day amid her kith and kin performed well its part, and added a rosy tint to her cheeks. Every hour was passed in peace and repose. Devoted friends spared no effort that affection could suggest to render her happy, and to expunge from her heart the terrific shadows of the past. What is it that true affection cannot achieve? It is the great lever by which the most overwhelming burdens are lifted from the weary heart. The Archimedean lever never performed its mission more successfully. Minna began to reason with herself, and to see that it would be a waste of existence for her to mould the present upon the ruined past. Wisdom dictated that she should seize the happiness within her grasp.

When a year had elapsed, she was convinced that her health was then as firm as it had ever been. There was not a vestige of the cough remaining, and she

thought it time for her to return home, as her friends at the South were urging her to do so. Every letter from Mrs. Neville, for months, had concluded with these words, "Come back to us, dear Minna." And Minna now replied, "I am coming."

During this year of absence from Parkgate many desirable changes had been made. Several rooms had been added to the house, new porticos built, and both the exterior and interior were so greatly improved that Minna scarcely recognized it as the gloomy abode she had much dreaded to see, and would never have returned to but for a cherished hope that had of late sprung up in her heart.

Just a year of widowhood had passed, when Minna received a letter from the lover of her childhood. To this missive she made no reply, but she forthwith decided to return to Parkgate, and leave future events to be determined by circumstances. There is an overruling power that shapes the destiny of man. Doubt it those who can!

Minna's sufferings had atoned, as far as human sufferings could atone, for the pain she had unwittingly given her aunt, to whose memory she had often heaved a sigh. Retribution had fallen, as it ever does, upon the head of the transgressor. Mr. Ruit's was an awful end. By his sinful career he brought his wife to death's door. On her he heaped humiliation and sorrow, and on himself he brought, as a sequence, *destruction!* Mrs. Ruit's sinking condition induced her naturally wicked brothers to conceive and carry out their murderous designs. Beside the Montés, there

were others who had sown to the whirlwind and were to reap the storm.

On the morning following the night of the tragedy, Leonora Flatté, accompanied by a friend, appeared at the darkened house. She was draped in crape from the crown of her head to the tip of her toes. On being admitted by request to the room where the body rested in the habiliments of the grave, she threw herself on the corpse and uttered screams of wild and passionate grief, regardless of the presence of the watchers, who most assuredly drew inferences derogatory in the extreme to the unfortunate woman, who was so utterly lost to decency as to make such an exposé of grief. Real, heart-felt sorrow is silent, sacred, undemonstrative.

About six months had rolled by after this piteous scene, when Leonora solaced herself by marrying a stranger after a very short acquaintance, who was attracted at first sight by her rolling black eyes and her dimpled cheeks. Immediately after the marriage, the wedded pair bade adieu to the land of orange groves and flowers, and turned their faces towards the North, where they expected to reside. Justice is ever even-handed, and retribution of an overwhelming character befell Leonora on the journey. By a sad railway accident she lost beauty of feature and symmetry of figure, and was transformed into a cripple for life. Her husband for awhile was quite devoted; but the post of nurse is not an attractive one to men, even the best of them are tinged with too great a coloring of selfishness to admit of their acting the part of faithful nurse-tenders to sick wives. Leonora's dearly beloved speedily per-

suaded himself that his dear-wife would be infinitely more comfortable in a hospital than she could be in a lodging-house with him. This idea was acted upon. After fixing Leonora in a place of safety, her husband returned to his old home in the South. We shall also take leave of her here, and in doing so, we may be allowed to express the hope that she will weep

"Blest tears of soul-felt penitence,  
In whose benign, redeeming flow  
Is felt the first, the only sense  
Of guiltless joy that guilt can know."

## CHAPTER XXXII.

"The cold in clime are cold in blood,  
Their love can scarce deserve the name;  
But mine was like the lava flood  
That boils in Ætna's breast of flame.

GIAOUR.

IT was in the early part of the delightful month of October that Minna turned her face towards the South; she was accompanied by her friend Miss Ellen Brent, who had promised to pass the winter at Parkgate. Her presence was an immense relief to Minna, for she had dreaded returning alone. Their friendship began at boarding-school, and it seemed to have strengthened with the advance of years. In saying good-by to her revered grandmother, Minna's pain was alleviated by this reflection, "she was free, and could repeat her visit at pleasure, and if her grandmother desired her presence, there was now no restraining power on earth to thwart their wishes."

The faithful Eunice, with her glossy black face, was wild with joy at the prospect of a speedy return to the "old place;" yet she admitted "that time had taken up its wings and *flyed* by, and she had not so much as once dreamed of witches since she came to this *apple* land."

On arriving at the city of O——, the party would

leave the steamboat, take the rail cars, and in this way be conveyed to Parkgate. Mr. Temple had been informed by Mrs. Neville of Mrs. Ruit's expected arrival, consequently he was on the *qui vive*. Fortune, however, was unpropitious. The boat came into port about midnight. Mrs. Ruit and Miss Brent were glad to leave the boat and betake themselves to the hotel. After a hasty breakfast, they sallied out to fill an order for hats, dresses, etc., for friends in the West. After this business had been satisfactorily transacted, they returned to the hotel, where a number of cards awaited them. Mr. Temple's was among them; Minna saw a line in pencil under his name, which she eagerly read:

"Can I see you at eight o'clock?"

They met in a drawing-room crowded with gay persons, consequently Minna's excessive agitation was unobserved. Miss Brent was occupied with a friend, which gave Mr. Temple an opportunity for saying a private word to Minna. "Mrs. Ruit did you receive a missive from an old friend three months since?"

"Yes, I did."

"But you did not condescend to reply."

"I had a good reason for not doing so." She blushed deeply and smiled. No other answer was required.

Mr. Temple sat until a late hour, for which he apologized, as the ladies were to leave for Parkgate at the hour of six o'clock next day. A retinue of friends attended them to the cars and saw them comfortably seated. At the last moment, Mr. Temple whispered to Minna, "May I hope, or must I still weep the waste of years?"

Minna's reason for not having replied to the letter

received in the West was excellent,—she wished to make herself acquainted with the sentiments of the Temple clan, with regard to her union with William Temple, before she would give him a ray of hope or in any way commit herself.

Mrs. Temple was the first friend who called at Parkgate to welcome home the returned absentee; by her affectionate greeting, Minna readily learned that which she most ardently desired to know. Mrs. Temple said, "she was the bearer of a message from her daughter Mary, which had been conveyed by letter, but she would postpone delivering it until her next call."

To this Minna replied, "As dear Mary is well, and has not forgotten me, I cheerfully submit to your decision, and shall live on the hope of seeing you here again in the course of a few days."

The hopeless darkness that had for years shadowed Minna's path was now superseded by a brightness so joyous, so intense, that it was bewildering. Doubts, fears, and clouds had all vanished, and her heart overflowed with gratitude to the merciful bestower of such happiness as was now hers, and of which she felt herself unworthy.

The venerable Mrs. Monté gave a cordial assent to the contemplated marriage, and this added the superfluous drop to Minna's cup of joy. In the May following, our faithful hero led his beloved to the altar,—every member of the Temple family were present save Mary and her professor. A few other friends were invited, chiefly those who had been faithful to Minna in adversity and sorrow. The Nevilles and Merryvales were of the number,—Laura was in

ecstasies at the change in her friend's condition; she had rebelled against the first marriage. She now said, "Minna, I think you will be as happy as I am."

Mr. Temple took his wife immediately to New York, from thence they would embark for Europe,—when they had done a world of sight-seeing there, they anticipated making a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Mary and her professor were to be of the party.

THE END.

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