

AS BY FIRE.

BY

MISS NELLY MARSHALL *McAfee*

"Swerving virtue
Endureth not rebuke, while that that's steadfast
Suns the doubt away."

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Dedication.

A Myrtle Leaf

TO BE TWINED AMID THE LAUREL AND THE BAY

THAT ALREADY CROWN THE BROW OF ONE

WHO HAS FEW PEERS,

WHETHER AS

A SOLDIER, GENTLEMAN, OR FRIEND.



AS BY FIRE.

CHAPTER . I.

THE last rays of a golden sunset drifted in through the open window of a simple farm cottage that stood on the outskirts of the village of N——. Near that open window sat an old lady whose face was “ruttet deep with the ruts of misery.”

Not far from her, reclining upon a bed, was a beautiful young woman of perhaps twenty summers. On her arm there slept an infant, whose mobile features bore no resemblance to her own. The young woman was softly caressing the dark silken rings of hair on the tiny head; suddenly looking up, she said: “Mother! come nearer, please: I would speak to you once more before I die, of my treasure—here.”

The old lady drew her chair nearer to the bedside, but the cold, hard, unpitying look knew no relenting, nor was there a waver of tenderness in the stern harsh voice: “What do you wish to say?”

"The seal of death will soon be set upon my lips, silencing them forever, and yet in this hour of parting while I proclaim my innocence, I cannot betray the name of my husband. But—mother! I am innocent! Promise to love my blessed child—to watch over her—to guide and guard her until her father comes to claim her—"

"The child shall not starve; I can promise nothing more."

The young woman drew the infant still closer to her heart and laid her cheek upon its forehead, but replied not to her mother's hard, cruel words.

"My little lamb—my precious—God takes care of the fatherless," she whispered softly.

And the twilight crept on, but no sound broke the profound silence that reigned in that chamber of death. At last, as if impatient to hear the weak voice of the sufferer again, the old lady put out her hand and lightly touched the pallid face turned toward her, but the blue-veined temple gave no responsive pulse—the cheek was cold, and the arms that encircled the child were rigid. Electra Dudley was dead. No cry of sorrow escaped her mother. Folding her hands, she gazed upon those placid, beautiful features, and murmured:

"Better thus—ay! ten thousand times better thus, than to live—branded with disgrace and shame!"

The graceful limbs were composed into the rigid outlines of death; the pale hands were folded over the silent heart; the soft, waxen-hued lids were closed down on the azure eyes, that would never open smil-

ingly to the sunshine again; the white drapery was disposed over all; the tapers were lighted, and the beautiful sleeper was left through the silent hours alone.

Mrs. Dudley sat beside the cradle where slumbered the babe, unconscious of its bereavement, muttering to herself: "I will keep my vow; her wrongs shall be righted—they shall—they shall!"

None dared to intrude upon her privacy, therefore none knew that her eyes were stony and cold, nor that she laughed a jeering laugh, while the dead body of the woman who had been a daughter to her lay still and lonely in the room below her.

Little Electra was welcomed to her grandmother's heart, not as a child to be loved, petted, and caressed, not as an unsullied soul for whose purity and guidance her aged heart would one day be called upon to answer at the Grand Tribunal, but as a means of revenge, for even as the child slept a mad and bitter vengeance blew its infectious breath over her fresh, sweet loveliness. What might be expected in the untrodden years of futurity? One curse more terrible than the sword of Damocles hung over that infant's head. She could never claim a father, that right having been denied her through the base selfishness of a man who regarded his comfort less lightly than his honor.

Mrs. Dudley a few days after the death of her daughter took the early morning train from N—, and soon after settled down in the home of a widowed daughter—Mrs. Adelaide Hayden—who resided in the county

of Franklin, Ky., and Electra was received as any other poor little wanderer would have been sheltered from the cold charities of a rude world. How could she be welcomed otherwise, when "SHAME" was branded on her baby-brow?

Time flew on apace, and from infancy to her sixth summer Electra passed, and, untasted yet, the fruit of good and evil hung golden and red in the sunshine of life. Her winning artlessness bound all hearts to her; and pale, dignified Mrs. Dudley alone seemed to remember the gloom that overhung the history of the dead.

Electra was a strange child. She had no playmates, never even expressed a wish for any. Her happiness seemed to consist in solitude. She would steal away amid the shadows of the grand old forests around the "Grange," and lying amid the waving grasses, would listen to the singing-birds, and the ripple of the limpid brook, which so often mirrored her elfin face; or she would weave wreaths and chaplets of gay flowers and leaves, with which she would deck herself in childish sport—looking like a second Titania ruling the king-cups and the sweet-breathed violets. Such alone were her amusements. But one member of the family seemed to notice her with particular attention, and to treat her with unvarying tenderness. This was her cousin, William Hayden, a youth of eighteen, tall and extremely handsome; but his deep interest was not

reciprocated by the child, for she would shrink shyly away from his caresses, and shun his presence whenever the opportunity to do so presented itself. This conduct upon her part never appeared to surprise him; on the contrary, it, with singular fascination, seemed to attract him more toward her, and every proof of affection which a grown person can lavish upon a child he bestowed upon her. In her this evidently awakened a sense of deep gratitude which as yet her childish lips found no words to express, but nothing altered her shy, shrinking manner of receiving his caresses. When he returned to college, after the vacations were over, each week with the promptitude of a bulletin would bring a letter addressed to Miss Electra Dudley; and though she never replied with even a childish scroll, the good-natured, characteristic, cousin's letters still continued to arrive.

Mrs. Dudley encouraged her grand-daughter's dislike to her cousin, and even disliked him herself for his persistent devotion.

"I want this girl to be adamant," she would sometimes say, after her cold, hard fashion, when alone. "Even the loves of consanguinity will render her incapable of doing that which I intend she shall do."

Therefore, whenever she detected Electra's love, for even her pets, becoming ardent, they would suddenly die, or be found missing, with the cage-door open, and feathers or down, as the case might be, strewn the floor. Tears, unavailing tears, the child wept over these trials, but never imagined the true source from which they emanated.

"Grandma!" she cried one day, suddenly bursting into the room where her aunt and grandmother sat quietly sewing, "I am going to let all my pets go; and, Aunt Adelaide, you may write to William never to send me any more!" Hiding her face in her hands, she cast herself upon the floor weeping bitterly.

"Electra!" there was a shade of pity in her grandmother's usually cold tones, "get up, and come to me."

Never knowing that she could resist her, the child obeyed reluctantly, and stood with downcast head beside Mrs. Dudley, who, placing her hand upon her shoulder, asked:

"Are you weary of your pets, child?"

"Oh, no, Grandma; but—"

"What?" Her tones so cold and modulated fell upon the troubled little breast like dead weights; but rallying after a moment's pause, Electra replied:

"They do not love *me*!"—they are always dying, getting killed, or running away."

"Which one is dead now?"

"Jim, my mocking-bird. And oh, to think he will never sing any more—oh! oh! oh!"

Again the childish cheeks were wet with tears.

"Pshaw! can I not give you another?" asked Mrs. Dudley, with a twinge of remorse at her heart.

"Yes, Grandma; but that would not be Jim, and I loved him!"

"Well, then, do not have any more pets. You are getting too old for such follies; and you might as well break off to-day, as years hence. Study your lessons;

books are the best friends after all; they never change—never deceive! Now, cease crying. And, Electra! never again let me see you exhibit the passion you have shown to-day."

Humbled, trembling, ashamed, little Electra slid from her grandmother's presence, and escaping into the woods, gave vent to her grief for her lost darling, where the gnarled oaks listened and the gentle zephyrs seemed to murmur sympathy. And thus it happened that this child of six years of age became hedged in by a system of education so chilling to the heart's fresh and warm impulses, that she feared to love the pets that had made joyous the lone hours of her life. The chilling clouds of disappointment had been made to sweep across her path, projecting the cold and cheerless picture of existence between her and the bright beautiful sun so natural to childhood; she turned to the books that were given her, and banished the idols and sports which had yielded but short-lived pleasures at best. But the years lingered not over her sorrows: they fled past, and each new cycle found her as the old had left her—an artless, untamed child of nature. Naturally of a sweet and loving disposition, she was rendered restive by sternness and frequent rebukes, until, prematurely soured against home and home faces, with almost a yearning she anticipated William's return to the "Grange," though when they had parted years before, he had borne away her childish aversion as a guerdon for his youthful passion. Generous and open-hearted to a fault, she possessed within her nature the germ of a

noble womanhood, but the biting frosts of indifference bade fair to destroy it. She grew like a mountain-flower, delicate yet hardy, sweet, exquisitely fresh and fair, yet capable of how much refinement and culture ! The wild romance of her nature was only strengthened by the influence and surroundings of her life at the "Grange,"—a long, low, dark-looking building with clinging ivy and wild-roses pending their graceful sprays from its rough, gray-stone walls. A lawn dotted over with wild clusters of uneven-looking shrubbery, a few flowers, and walks winding in and out amid a forest of trees whose long dark branches often swept the ground with their waving verdure. Such was her home. And she grew amid these shadows, with broad stretches of meadow beyond, lit with golden sunshine, into a haughty, independent, beautiful girl, who was called "wild," "queer," "strange," because she flashed the steely gleam of her hazel eyes rather than the shy sunlight which made them glorious. And then, too, there were sudden gleams of light, sometimes strangely irradiating her pale face, lit with the flush of a prairie-rose at the cheeks, and a glow of carmine on the little arched lips. But Electra never dreamed that she was beautiful.



CHAPTER II.

ONE day not long after Electra had completed her seventeenth birthday, the inmates of the Grange were thrown into a flutter by a letter announcing the early return of William Hayden from his northern tour. He had lived but little at home since he had attained his majority, and at the prospect of his return to the family-circle the whole household was in a flutter of delight, and none seemed more joyful in anticipating his return than Electra. Hither and thither she flew like a bird on the wing. Vases were filled with the rarest and sweetest flowers that the parterres afforded, windows were redraped in the purest muslin, everything wore its most airy and attractive guise to welcome the wanderer.

And from the day that the young man stepped over the threshold of his boyhood's home, a change took place in Electra's life. A pony was bought for her especial use ; the piano, which hitherto had only been opened at set hours for practising, now echoed its silvery notes at the sweet will of the tapering, girlish fingers ; all the articles necessary to the art of *peinture* were supplied her without stint ; picnics and fishing-parties were formed, in all of which the young girl joined. Though only seventeen years of age, she was matured as a woman of twenty. Rounded and full, she yet possessed

that lithe gracefulness so common to early girlhood. Every gesture was grace, every glance was expression. William Hayden loved her. He selected books for her to read; criticised and guided her, and bent himself with a will to the task of maturing, strengthening, and cultivating her intellect. As the weeks vanished—Spring passed—and the summer months, weary of sunshine and flowers, were seeking the umbrageous wealth of the leafy woods, where Autumn was mixing her colors in eager anticipation of the frost. Electra's aunt and grandmother noticed that she sought, rather than avoided her cousin's society; and they feared, they scarce knew what, as with folded hands, but watchful eyes, they awaited the coming event whose dread shadow had already cast itself at their feet.

William Hayden allowed nothing to escape his attention; not a gesture—not a glance—not a whisper—nor a sneer, passing *tête-à-tête* between the two ladies was lost upon him, and he hoarded his strength for the *finale* which he felt must come. And it did come one evening as they returned from a long ride protracted beyond the usual hour.

As they went dashing along at full speed up the avenue, Mrs. Hayden and Mrs. Dudley stepped out upon the lawn to greet them. Far away over the hills the sun was setting in a sea of shimmering gold, and clouds of rose, beryl, and white, floated lightly across the azure sky. It was a radiant evening, and Electra's poetic temperament, with a fulness of joy unspeakable, drank in its glories. Turning her hazel eyes to the West,

while the fitful flashes of color deepened on her dark bright face, she clasped her hands, exclaiming:

"Oh! how beautiful!"

"Beautiful, indeed!" murmured William Hayden, in a gentle, winning voice, drawing with his magnetic eyes Electra's gaze from the sunset to his face. Blushes stole up to her temples, as he lifted her light form from the saddle, and in doing so gave her a slight pressure to his breast; and they burned painfully upon her cheeks as he bent his head down toward her, whispering one low word of tenderness which breathed volumes to her heart, and breaking from him suddenly, she gathered up her habit, and bounded lightly as a fawn toward the house.

William joined the ladies on the lawn, and as he struck the end of his riding-whip against the toe of his boot, asked with a proud flush on his face:

"Does she not ride magnificently, mother? I always told you she would make a splendid woman. She is now more polished in her address, and her mental culture is superior to that of any woman or girl within the circuit of a hundred miles!"

Mrs. Dudley drew herself up with a haughty air, remarking as she did so—

"How extravagantly you talk! the girl had better be sent to school before you pronounce her educated."

"School?" exclaimed William, "much good will school do her! Systematic tutelage indeed! She has free access to the library here, and nothing more is necessary. I think, grandmother, you render me poor

gratitude for my watchful guardianship over my pretty cousin !”

“William, my son, I wish you would not talk so. You almost make me fancy that you forget the vast difference between yourself and Electra,” said his mother, in a faltering way, as she laid her hand on his arm.

“What do you mean? Vast difference? Is she not my cousin? Is she not attractive, bright, beautiful? Wherein lies the vast difference? Pray explain; my poor brain is dull of comprehension.”

“Her birth makes all the difference, my son,” replied Mrs. Hayden, as he petulantly shook off the clasp of her delicate fingers.

“Her birth can make none to me! If my aunt was unfortunate, it can cast no reflection upon her pure and beautiful child!”

There was such a proud, fierce light in his eye, such a lofty scorn in his haughty gesture, that his mother was for the moment silenced.

“Well, sir,” and Mrs. Dudley drew her stately form to its full height before her grandson, and levelled the gaze of her cold, gray eyes upon his eager, handsome face, “if you do not understand the difference between yourself and that parentless waif, I will define it. You are the last scion of a time-honored race, and you shall not darken its escutcheon by a *mésalliance*. I would send her to the confines of the earth before you should marry her. And you!”—here she stepped nearer, but without a quiver in her voice, without raising it

even a semitone, she continued—“I had rather follow you to the grave, than hear you call that shameless waif—wife.”

She turned from him with a haughty gesture which forbade a reply, and without another word passed across the lawn, and into the house.

“Mother!”

Heavily the young man brought his hand down on his mother’s arm as he spoke—

“I have loved that child since I first took her a wee baby out of grandmother’s arms! and—she does not love me. But listen! I will make no other woman my wife; and I will follow her to the ends of the earth before another shall win her!”

Whirling on his heel, he left his mother, and hastily crossing the lawn, disappeared in the forest which lay to the east of the grounds.

Mrs. Hayden entered the house with an anxious heart, muttering:

“So much for charity! And because I was for once so weak as to be charitable, I deserve it. I too would see my boy dead before a taint of dishonor should defile him!”

“Electra Dudley, come to me,” said Mrs. Dudley, opening the door of her room as Electra went skipping along the hall with a roll of music in her hand. The young girl’s song died on her lips.

“What is it, Grandma?” she said, stepping quickly into the room.

"Where were you going?"

"To sing '*Casta Diva*' with Cousin William. He says I sing it splendidly now, Grandma."

"Put that music down on the table and take your seat."

With mingled wonderment and fear Electra obeyed.

"Now," said the chilling voice, "I want you to answer me honestly; remember, you cannot deceive me, for I already know all that I would have you confirm."

"I always speak the truth, Grandmother," said Electra, flashing a reproachful glance at the stern face before her.

"Do you love William Hayden?"

"Oh, Grandma!" and forgetful of time and place—of all things but the ludicrous idea—Electra burst out into a merry peal of laughter, that made the walls ring again.

"Answer me."

"No, I do not."

"Has he ever acknowledged or expressed any affection for you?"

"Only as a dear, kind cousin. Why, Grandmother, do you ask these questions?"

Mrs. Dudley waved her impatiently aside.

"Are you telling me the truth?"

Electra did not reply, but again that reproachful flash of the dilated eyes confirmed that to which her lips had given utterance.

"Well," said Mrs. Dudley, "you are not to listen

to anything of the kind, however anxious he may be to speak. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Grandmother."

"You will not disobey me unless you desire my displeasure."

"No, Grandmother."

"I will make preparations without delay to enter you as a pupil at '*Bellerwood*.' It is my preference that you shall no longer remain at home."

"Oh! Grandma! leave the Grange? Go among strangers?—where nobody will be kind to me?—nobody care for me?" and the hot tears sprang to Electra's dark eyes.

"Listen,"—Mrs. Dudley laid her hand heavily on the young girl's arm. "It is just as well that you should know it now, as later: Electra, who was your father?"

"Your son? no?—Father?—I know not!"

"Nor I—nor any one. You are branded with shame! Your mother left the curse of her sin upon you."

The young girl at these words sank at Mrs. Dudley's feet, hiding her face in the heavy folds of her dress:

"Spare me—spare my angel mother! I have loved her so! Oh, Grandmother!"

Sobs shook her slight frame, while Mrs. Dudley continued:

"I believe you have attempted to deceive me; and you pay the penalty by the knowledge you gain of your birth. Your mother was sent North to have her education '*finished*,' and the consequence was she was ruined—deserted. You I received at her death,

through a sense of pity. Your Aunt Adelaide through charity gave you a home beneath her roof, and you have, with a depth of depravity one would scarcely expect at your age, attempted to win the love of William Hayden. He is a man of some position—he has honorable blood in his veins : you sprang from the *canaille* of the North, for aught I know to the contrary—”

With the fierce bound of a young tigress Electra leaped to her feet, pressed her hands close against her panting bosom, that seemed almost bursting with the sobs she attempted to control. Her face was marbled to the pallor of death, her eyes starting with horror from their sockets, her thin nostrils dilating with passion.

“Grandmother ! your soul should shrink within you at the thought of what you have blazoned so cruelly into the ears of your orphan grandchild, who is dependent upon your bounty. I do not believe you ! My mother was pure ! Something down in my heart tells me so. I go from you, never to return ! I will find my father—face down the calumny against my sweet mother, and then I will tell you how I scorn you for defaming her !”

With a sharp snap her little white teeth came together, and throwing up her arms she disappeared through the open door-way.



CHAPTER III.

MRS. DUDLEY, as her grandchild sprang through the doorway, stood as one petrified ; but after a moment's trance moved forward as if to detain her. Then restraining herself, muttered :

“’Tis well just as it is ; I have wakened the demon in her heart I expected to wake. She will find him !”

She sank back in her chair, and murmuring bitter words to herself forgot how time passed. The tea-bell rang. Rising, she went below. William Hayden stood beside the window, a heavy frown upon his broad, white brow, and a sinister sneer upon his proud lip, plainly visible beneath his well-trimmed moustache. His mother, with an air of supreme dignity, sat before the tea-tray. William looked up as his grandmother entered, and seeing she was alone, turned to the servant in waiting :

“Inform Miss Dudley that tea is ready.”

“It is unnecessary, William. Electra will not come down to-night,” replied Mrs. Dudley, in the most urbane manner, as she took her seat at the table, and unfolded her napkin without a shade of embarrassment.

“Is she ill ?”

William glanced at the calm, aged face keenly, but

it expressed nothing, nor was there emotion in her cold, even tones, as she said :

"Only a headache, produced by her long ride."

With ill-concealed anxiety he took his place at the table, but ate sparingly of the repast. After tea, Mrs. Dudley and Mrs. Hayden retired to the sitting-room, while William took possession of the portico, and hour after hour the vestibule echoed the footsteps tramping along the stone.

There were not many eyes that closed in slumber at the Grange that night : not many hearts whose pulses throbbed not painfully.

And Electra ?

As she darted through her grandmother's door, her brain was in such a whirl of passion that she was almost blinded. She caught a glimpse of her aunt in the sitting-room reading, but never thought to pause. On, out under the silent stars and peaceful sky—across the lawn—down the avenue to the gate, like a hunted deer she ran. There she paused to look backward ; just the wing of the house was visible from that point, and she saw the light from William Hayden's room flashing through the open window, and lying like a luminous shaft upon the velvety sward of the lawn. A shadow passed—then back again. "Poor William !" she whispered, with a dry sob, "Poor William ! I wish I could love you !" Then swinging open the gate she passed along the road winding like a stream before her. On, on, on ! through the hours, almost without rest or pause, until overpowered she sank upon the ground

and slept. With the great sun staring in her face, she awoke. While she lay there wondering what she should do—where go—the rapid tramp of a horse's hoofs echoed on the air. Rising quickly she hurried into the dense underbrush that skirted the highway, and lay down again in breathless haste behind a large, moss-grown log, just in time to escape the glance of her cousin, for the rider was William Hayden. He came thundering along at a mad gallop, raising a cloud of dust that shone in the sunlight like a golden haze. His eyes were wild and fierce, his face pallid, his lips bloodless and compressed. As he disappeared Electra drew a deep breath of relief. She waited perhaps half an hour, then rising sped on her way. Arriving at last at the point where the road forked east and west, she paused :

"This road leads to the station (William thinks I have taken it) ; that—God knows where," she murmured, resolutely setting her face westward ; and she travelled with such rapidity that it was almost as if Mercury had lent his wings to her flying feet.

It was late in the afternoon of the third day ; the glare of the sun was intense—terrible. Electra still trod on, though now with lagging, weary footsteps. Her body was faint from hunger, her throat parched with thirst, her head ached and throbbed, and her feet were swollen and blistered with the weary journey. Within a meadow which stretched to her right, purred a clear brook. She hailed it with delight wild as that which filled the breast of despairing Hagar, when the fountain sprang from

the burning sands of the desert. Entering the pasture she threw herself beneath the boughs of a broad-spreading beech, and drawing off her shoes and stockings, stretched her graceful feet in the water, and the ripples stole caressingly over them, murmuring of her beauty. Softly her tired eyelids closed down over her tired eyes, and she slept, while the gurgling music of the waters whispered in her dreams of clover-fields and dense oak-shades in the home she would know no more.

And the twilight came gliding up from the grave of the dead day, like a pale, sweet nun telling her beads to the night-winds, while one star shone upon her brow bright as the vestal watcher over Bethlehem.

"By Jove! Tom! Here is an adventure!" exclaimed a tall, magnificent-looking man, as he bent over the sleeping Electra. His comrade hastened toward him, and looking down upon the girl, replied:

"An adventure? Well, I rather guess it is!"

"She is a beauty."

That is a self-evident proposition," replied the gentleman addressed as Tom, "and I will tell you what it is, old fellow, something is wrong or she would not be here."

"How pretty her feet are! And look at these ankles, they are enough to run a man wild with admiration!"

"They are pretty," replied Tom, stooping, he scarce knew why, and rearranging the rumped and discomposed drapery of the sleeper.

"How graceful she is—how well formed! Her hands are white and pretty, too! See here, Tom! Look at this splendid solitaire! And a jewelled watch, by Jove!"

"Shall we wake her?" asked Tom, with a shade of impatience in his deep voice.

"Let me see her pretty face, first; I will never get another such chance," and the young man with a soft laugh caught up the heavy masses of waving hair Electra had unbraided, and spread over her face, to shut out the light.

"Oh! Tom, she's lovely! Such color! Such a mouth! And look at that pretty nose! I wonder what color her eyes are? Blue, I hope; I do love blue eyes!"

"See here, Evesham, it strikes me you have discussed her long enough, and we had better decide upon some course before we rouse her."

"Well, maybe I have. One thing I know, I have either seen this girl, or somebody wonderfully like her, before to-day. Let us make her tell us how she came upon your estate, and that we hold ourselves in readiness to serve her, in whatever way her Imperial Highness commands."

"It is about time to stop jesting, Evesham," said the elder man.

Stooping, he placed his hands on the rounded shoulder, gleaming with surpassing fairness through the folds of her pink muslin dress, but started back, whispering:

"Evesham, this girl is ill—burning up with fever!"

Again he essayed to rouse her, but only succeeded in eliciting a low, weary moan from the parched little lips, and a murmur: "Oh, mother!—my pure, sweet mother!"

The young man placed his arm beneath her shoulder, and raised her to a leaning posture on his breast. This partially roused her. She raised her eyes, wild with fever and delirium, to his anxious face, and murmured:

"Poor William! I am sorry for you. Indeed I am; but I cannot love you. Do not question 'why not' so sorrowfully. God meant that I should not, else He would have put it in my heart. I know that you are good, kind, generous. I am grateful—but I cannot love you. Oh! no, no, no!"

Rising suddenly, she pointed to his comrade with a jeering laugh, and cried out excitedly:

"There stands grandmother, William! Anybody to look at her would think she was a good woman! Well"—and she drew confidentially toward Tom—"I tell you she has tormented and worried me all my life, and sometimes I would pray to die, just to get away from her! I never have been happy! At least never until you came home; and don't you think, last night—yes, last night she told me that I had no father! that my mother was wicked and impure! Oh! William! it almost broke my heart!—and I begged her not to talk so; but she pushed me away, and called me base and wicked, because I had made you love your little

Electra; and she said I was like my mother—full of sin! I told her—Oh, I told her—I told her—"

She stared wildly around, her brain whirled, she would have fallen, but the young man, Evesham, sprang forward and caught her. Breaking away from him with a gesture of scorn and abhorrence, she shrieked:

"Don't touch me; don't, I tell you! Oh, grandmother, I hate you—I hate you!"

Shriek after shriek burst from her lips, and she fled before them, like a frightened deer.

Both young men pursued, but failed to overtake her, till she fell from utter exhaustion. She had fainted. Evesham stooped and picked her up, tenderly and lightly as if she had been a child, and resting her head on his shoulder he strode along.

"Well, this is truly an adventure. If you are weary, Evesham, I will take her," said Tom.

"No need," replied Evesham; she's as light as a feather. I had rather carry her than not."

Opening a gate that led into a beautiful, terraced garden, the two young men hurried on toward a house that stood upon the gentle slope of a hill. Running up the steps, and entering the hall they deposited their burden in a room which opened to the left, and while Evesham bathed the face with cold water, his comrade hastened away to summon his housekeeper to the assistance of the fair stranger thus singularly placed dependent upon his courtesy and protection.

CHAPTER IV.

THE chamber was darkened; a fire burned on the hearth; all was as comfortable and as pleasant as could be; nothing was there to remind one that it was a "sick-room." Electra lay staring around her. At first she fancied she had just awakened from an unpleasant dream; that she was still at the "Grange;" but that proud, beautiful face beside her refuted the idea. Then she remembered all, and that now she was among strangers. Memories of kind faces, and rich-toned gentle voices she had seen and heard beside the mossy spring came back to her, and thinking God had been very good to her, the quiet tears stole over her palid face. And lying there with her homeless eyes looking down the dim vistas of the future, she beheld the cheerless, "set gray life" to which the Angel of Destiny had allotted her. Did she repine? Perhaps for an instant the thought surged over her that the dark, dreary days were too many, but conquering her despair, she lifted herself up, and took courage in the light of faith.

"If it is God's will that I shall be a pilgrim," she murmured wearily—"that I shall live among strangers, and struggle on alone to the goal—I humbly bow my head, and lay my breast bare for the chastening signet of His will to stamp it with undying faith!"

And a holy peace settled on her brow, like the gleam of an angel's smile.

The watcher beside her had wearied, and slept at his post. His face was turned toward her. His black lashes lay like a dark fringe on his olive cheeks; the brows were well defined, the forehead broad and fair, the nose proud and patrician, the mouth firm and beautiful, the moustache dark and curling, the whiskers upon his cheeks heavy, and black as the silky hair that waved over his shapely head, which was crowned with a cap of crimson velvet, adorned with a very elegant silken and gilded tassel. A rich robe of the same material, confined at the waist and opening in front, displayed the immaculate linen and the jaunty neck-tie. All combined to present a picture at once admirable and attractive. This young man numbered perhaps twenty-nine or thirty years. An Englishman by birth and education, he had, during a tour in Canada, formed the acquaintance of his friend and host, Dr. Thomas Brandenburg, and had arrived at "Beechmoor" only the day previous to Electra's flight from the scorn of her unnatural grandmother. It was his intention to remain all the winter with his friend, consequently, as a member of the family (which consisted of the young physician and his housekeeper), he accepted his position as assistant watcher during several hours of each night. Electra's eyes had just begun to droop heavily with weariness and slumber, when the opening of a door aroused her. But all was quiet again. Suddenly a whisper disturbed the profound silence, and Dr. Bran-

denburg stood within the room, his light step not having betrayed his entrance until he spoke :

"Evesham, old fellow, are you asleep?"

"Indeed, Tom, I did not mean it. It was only for a moment!" And Lynn Evesham sprang from his seat, rubbing his sleepy eyes with a vigorous earnestness that made Dr. Brandenburg smile.

"I have something to tell you, Evesham ; sit down."

The two young men sat down together, and Dr. Brandenburg placed a newspaper on the table in front of him, and looking at Evesham, said mysteriously :

"The problem is partially solved. This young lady is of the best 'blood' of Kentucky."

"How do you know?"

"Why, by this," said Dr. Brandenburg, reading in a low whisper from the paper :

"REWARD.—\$1,000 for information of Miss Electra Dudley, who strayed from home in a demented state, on the 29th of August. Any clue to her whereabouts will be gratefully received by her relatives. Address,

"MRS. CATHERINE DUDLEY,

"M——, Kentucky."

"Now, Evesham, it is clear enough to me that this young girl has been unkindly, unjustly treated by these same relatives who post their reward for her as they would for a pet greyhound ;—she would not have fled that home without she had been so treated. Now, I

have resolved not to answer this advertisement until she sees it ; and even then, she shall decide for herself. I will not act at all in the matter, until I consult her. What do you say to this determination?"

"Right, Tom, as you always are."

"And I have decided upon another matter—should she refuse to return to her relatives, I shall constitute myself her guardian, and change her name (for otherwise, being under age, the law would restore her to her relatives)."

"Are you in earnest, Tom?"

"Of course, I am. What shall we name her?"

"Rutherford is pretty, and goes well with 'Electra ;' suppose you take it?" said Evesham, with a light laugh, still doubting his friend's earnestness.

"And so I will. I like it," said Dr. Brandenburg promptly. "But some arrangements different from the present ones must be effected, and that without delay. She will be convalescing from to-night. As her physician, I will still visit her ; but, old fellow, this is your last watch, unless she relapses."

Evesham sighed—"It has been a real happiness to study her beautiful face !"

"No matter ; all of it amounts to just this ; such a sweet creature as she is cannot remain with us without some other lady in the house."

"Why, what do you mean?" asked Lynn Evesham, curiously eying his comrade.

"Simply this ; this world is full of suspicious, censorious people, and I must protect my 'ward' from

them, as I would shelter my own daughter—had I one. You know the old lines—

“‘Be thou . . .
Chaste as snow, etc.’”

“Well, where is Mrs. Barnaby, I would like to know?” asked Evesham.

“Oh pshaw! Man, you are demented! Mrs. Barnaby is my housekeeper.”

“Well, what if she is?”

“She cannot change her position, in *my* home, from a menial to an associate, especially to this unfortunate young lady, whom I design assisting in her laudable intention of finding her father (which intention her delirium has betrayed to us), and who is to be treated *here* as an empress who might claim and deserve to receive loyal allegiance from every true-hearted gentleman in the land.”

The man spoke resolutely, and Lynn Evesham saw that he was in earnest in all he said.

A pause ensued, which was quickly broken.

“I have already made arrangements to clear away this difficulty.”

“How—what?”

“Well, I have an aunt and cousin—both clever enough in their way, but such thorough “fashionables” that I shrink from their social innovations upon my batchelordom as I would shun a plague.”

“Well, what then?” asked Evesham, as his companion again paused.

“Only this: I wrote to Aunt Lucy to come to Beechmoor, and bring Fanny to spend the winter, and I would promise them a pleasant time, and to-night I received a letter announcing their intention to accept my invitation: they will be here to-morrow.”

“But, will this suit the invalid?” asked Evesham, anxiously.

“Exactly. A little excitement to draw her mind from herself is what she absolutely needs. We know that she is unfortunate, and nothing remains for us to do, but to render her every possible assistance.”

“That we will! Do you know, Tom, these hours I have passed here, beside her sick-bed, have been the very happiest of my life!” Evesham spoke with solemn earnestness.

“Pshaw!” muttered Doctor Brandenburg, but his face grew strangely pallid, as he shaded it with his slender white hands.

Electra noticed it, as she lay there watching the two men; she had caught nothing but the last remark from Evesham and the Doctor’s reply; but her heart throbbed with a tender pity for them both. She began to understand that she was beautiful, and that beauty is not always a fortunate possession. She wanted to speak—to tell all then, but her voice was so weak, her heart so faint, that she did not venture.

“I will wait until to-morrow,” she thought; “I will be stronger then.”

All the next day the gentlemen were invisible, at least while Electra was awake. When the dusk stole

down, she was roused from a deep sleep by the sounds of conversation in the room adjoining, the door of which stood slightly ajar :

"She is certainly very beautiful ; indeed, the most beautiful woman I ever saw," said a rich, mellow voice, which she recognized as belonging to Lynn Evesham.

"I agree with you," replied Dr. Brandenburg ; that voice too she recognized.

"Well, I'm sure, cousin Tom, you pretty boldly ignore *my* rights to your admiration!" said a gay, laughing voice—a voice that had something very musical in its metallic ring, Electra thought.

"Not at all, Coz ; I'm sure I think you beautiful, and I love you dearly ; but because I do, do you intend to play general exterminator to every emotion of *admiration* I may entertain for this *belle des belles*?" answered Doctor Brandenburg merrily.

"Yes, that I do!" she cried in mock indignation. "Cease instantly agreeing with this ungallant Englishman, that any woman lives fairer than the youthful one in your presence now ! Surely all the Harry Hotspurs have passed into oblivion ! This modern *Anglais* is no glass wherein you should dress yourself ! Or his courtesy—"

"You are rather severe, Miss Moore. Remember,

" 'True wit is like the precious stone
Dug from the Indian mine,
Which boasts two varied powers in one,
To cut as well as shine.'"

And to judge from Mr. Evesham's face, I imagine your

sarcasm (?) stands very little chance of being appreciated."

This rebuke came from a frigid, stately-looking woman who stood in the doorway. Electra gazed on her with that species of fascination which moves one to admire the glittering scales of a serpent.

"Gentlemen, mamma is a social Adventist. I venture the information lest you may not perceive it ! She is anticipating that paradisaical day when we will find this miserable universe reorganized under the statutes of a new Atlantis—or at best, such statutes as will cause us always to appear in the following order :

" 'The learned well-bred
And the well-bred sincere :
(that's the fault she finds with me !)
Modestly bold, and *humanly severe*.'"

Miss Fanny spoke with some acrimony, and Mrs. Moore, without retort, crossed the threshold, advanced to the bedside, and rested her jewelled fingers lightly upon the invalid's brow. Electra shrank away from the touch.

"Ah, you are awake ; how do you feel this evening?" asked the metallic voice.

"Better, I thank you—much better," replied Electra, faintly ; but not too low for Doctor Brandenburg's ear to catch the gentle murmur, and he advanced to the bedside, and tenderly bending over her said, while he took her hand between his firm palms :

"I am glad my patient is better, but she must be

very quiet, and not talk, if she puts any valuation on her life."

Then he counted her pulse, and replaced her hand upon the bed. Going to a table standing in another part of the room, he poured out a glass of cordial, and returning, raised the invalid up from the downy pillows, and held it to her lips.

She drank it, and sighed softly :

"Ah, I thank you."

Dr. Brandenburg's brow flushed strangely, and this did not escape the attention of Mrs. Moore, who was at all times a keen observer. Turning toward the adjoining room, he held the door open, saying, in his quiet, positive way :

"Aunt, we can leave her. Mrs. Barnaby will serve her ; and even the slightest conversation will excite her now already exhausted nervous system, and will be positively injurious and dangerous by causing a relapse."

Mrs. Moore returned to the sitting-room, with far from a pleased look regnant upon her cold, patrician features.

Now, there are few who, in their daily lives, live up to sweet charity—which is a part of Divinity,—but of those few Dr. Brandenburg numbered one. He pitied the unfortunate, and never allowed an opportunity to pass ungrasped when he could serve them, or ameliorate their condition. Whenever he met the hungry, he fed them ; the needy, he clothed them ; the sick, he ministered kindly and faithfully to them, until strengthened and comforted, they could resume their lonely

life-journeys. Wherever he met the unhappy, he consoled them with the assurance of Divine love.

"Through ways we have not known
He leads his own,"

were words not infrequently upon his lips, and in the discipline of his life, he regarded earth as but the transitory home where he was required to prepare himself for a final resting-place in that house not made with hands, where the righteous dwell together. Whatever sorrow he experienced—whatever disappointment—he consoled himself with the glorious and happy thought that purified here through the furnace of affliction, he would be better able to stand fearlessly in the light of that eternal day when neither enemies, nor storms, nor adversity, will shut the smallest of us from our Saviour's love—so we deserve it. It was well that to such a guardian God guided the orphan girl in her sorrow and desolation !



CHAPTER V.

IT was October—the glory of the Autumn time ! Beneath her golden-slipped feet the summer flowers had faded softly and unobtrusively as the violet's perfume on the breath of June. The birds were winging their flight southward to a bluer sky and a clime less cold. The elm and beechen boughs swayed mournfully in the wind, while their glistening leaves flitted and floated and flirted about like tropical birds in the sweet autumn sunshine. The murmur, dreamy and low, of the limpid streams ; the azure haze floating above hillside and meadow, like the mantle of God trailing over His footstool—earth—enshrouded everything in the light of a sweet mysterious dream !

Three days had passed since the arrival of Mrs. Moore and her daughter, and still Doctor Brandenburg prohibited conversation upon Electra's lips. It was now in the fading light of the day that she murmured, as she raised her gentle eyes to his face :

"My friend—I—"

But she could not proceed ; rising tears stifled the sound of the sweet voice utterly.

"Ah, well ; by-and-by," he replied, in a gentle tone, and the storm of emotion in her heart was calmed ; as when that Divine Healer laid his hand on the ocean's

mane and whispered, "Peace : Be still." So this earthly healer soothed and comforted.

Mrs. Moore who had been sitting beside the window engaged upon a bit of embroidery, as long as the light was available, now folded the linen neatly, thrust the *broche* into it, and leaning languidly back in her chair stared in the coldest, well-bred manner possible, at the invalid. She looked so cold, so pensive, so stately, it is no wonder that the human heart of this girl, sick for love and sympathy, should prompt her to turn her face to the wall, to avoid seeing her. The glance, the movement did not escape the observation of Dr. Brandenburg. Indeed, little did escape those eyes of his. Fanny Moore was singing, and accompanying her song with the rhythmic tinkling of the guitar, for the edification of Mr. Evesham, and her voice came stealing on the silence of the sick-room like the echoing tread of angel feet—low, and faint, and sweet.

"Oh, delicious !" whispered Electra, the thrill of the old days at the "Grange" suddenly pulsing her heart.

"Do you like it ?" asked Dr. Brandenburg, in a pleased tone.

"Oh, sir, I never heard so sweet a voice before ; it seems like the chime of a fairy-bell," said the young girl, as she lay there with closed eyes—all senses merged in that of hearing.

Suddenly Mrs. Moore's clear, ringing voice broke the charm, as she asked :

"Tom, is this Evesham a good catch ?"

"I do not quite understand your conventional phrase," replied her nephew, with a covert smile and sneer. The twilight gloom hid the former, but she *felt* the latter, and her voice was a tone colder as she replied :

"You are well aware, Tom, that I am no advocate for women being *handmaids* to their lords. I have no desire to see my Fanny transformed into one of these duped, down-trodden mortals. I guard her closely from all men whose physical attractions might tempt an inexperienced girl to weigh passion and not common sense in the scale of her heart."

"In other words, you mean that when the venerable patriarch comes forward with his magnificent dower of ten camels laden with jewels of silver and gold and precious stones, that beautiful Rebekah will be forthcoming," said Dr. Brandenburg, more indignantly than Electra imagined he could speak.

Mrs. Moore laughed a ringing, sarcastic laugh.

"My dear nephew, you drove the arrow home to the white centre on the target! that is precisely what I mean—be he youthful or aged, if he brings the ten camels and the burden of wealth—Rebekah will be forthcoming. I do not doubt that you are shocked at my candor, and indignant at my principles. You need not be; the daughters of the nineteenth century are just as much 'bought and sold,' as when in the streets of ancient Babylon they were 'knocked down' to the highest bidder; and in this age of gold, there is more than one woman linked, like beautiful Vashti, to wine-

bibbing, loathsome Ahasueruses. But what is the use of *our* discussing the subject? Tell me, is Evesham an 'eligible match?'"

"If it be eligible to be heir-presumptive to a princely fortune, then Lynn Evesham is eligible," said Dr. Brandenburg, contemptuously.

"Is that so?" said Mrs. Moore; "I confess myself delighted."

"It is true. Now, I suppose you will send Ruth to glean a golden harvest in the fields of Boaz?"

"Just so," said Mrs. Moore, lightly; "but before I send her forth, I must robe her in her 'gown of grass-green silk.'"

And with these words of raillery upon her lips, she hastened to the parlor, where she insisted upon Fanny making her toilette for tea.

"Well, Mrs. Moore, that is an innovation upon the rules of Batchelordom at Liberty Hall, that I scarce expected. I shall be disconsolate at Miss Fanny's loss. I was just beginning to realize that 'music hath charms to soothe the savage breast;' oh, I will declare that this dressing for tea is quite a bore!" said Mr. Evesham, contracting his dark brows.

"Never mind, Mr. Evesham," said the gay girl, "you and mamma can contest with these ivory combatants the 'Rise and Fall' of a half-dozen kingdoms and empires; and when I return you will pronounce me charming, and forget that a social green-room was necessary for me to retire into, while I prepared my stage-effects!" and she lifted a little box from the rose-

wood *élagère*, unfolded the chessboard, and with a sweeping courtesy withdrew.

Dr. Brandenburg sat beside his patient, and his face was tender with pity as he bent over her, and said :

"If you would be better satisfied, tell me ; but I assure you, before you put your feelings to this bitter test, that it is wholly unnecessary. I have already learned your sad story in your moments of delirium."

Electra hid her face upon the pillow.

"There now ! do not do so ! Be strong—patient ! I have something of importance to disclose to you. Can I speak now ?"

Electra signed for him to continue.

"Your grandmother has advertised for you."

"You did not answer her ? Oh, pray God you did not !" gasped Electra ; "she was so cruel ! I never intended to go back—never, never,—at least—"

"Just as I supposed, and I did not reply. I waited for you to decide for yourself."

Electra took his hand and carried it to her lips, with that grateful, dependent look, that again flushed the tint of carmine to the man's matchless brow.

A moment's silence ensued, and then he said :

"I have now a proposition to make to you, and you must hear me patiently through. You are young, inexperienced, and, if you will allow me—beautiful. You know nothing of the world, its mockery, its deception. I am a stranger to you, yet such is my sympathy for you in your distress, that I overstep all rules, and say to you candidly, let us drop, for the present,

those conventionalities which are used in polite society. Let us forget for the time that we are only acquaintances. Let etiquette exist as it best may ; you are in need, and I must try to assist you all in my power. Therefore, let me temporarily stand in the position of a brother toward you ; when fortune alters present circumstances, I will become the simple 'friend' again. Talk to me plainly, as to a brother, and I will talk as plainly to you. I am acquainted with your sorrow ; let nothing discourage you, for an honest determination to succeed, never failed to achieve any legitimate purpose. Believe me, the divine education of sorrow is neither objectless, nor void of beneficial fruition ; a fact which should furnish the basis for that patience which you surely are capable of practising. It is my wish to assist you in your search for your father ; but, to do this—to succeed—you must agree to be guided by me."

He hesitated to hear her reply.

"Oh, sir, I am helpless, but hopeful. I thank you for your generous kindness, but—"

"Well, this is the programme," he said, not noticing her extreme agitation, or at least passing it without a verbal observation ; "you must change your name ; appear to the world as my ward Miss Rutherford—as such I have already represented you to my aunt and cousin—and allow me to prosecute the search for your father, while you remain here. I have a fine library, and you may consider yourself privileged to enter it, at any and all times. I—"

"Oh, sir, you are too kind ! I cannot—I cannot."

"Cannot what, Miss Rutherford? If obedience had to be learned, I could understand you. But experience has been your task-mistress in the past. Is a graceful yielding now too hard?"

"Yes, sir; it is very hard. I am obliged for all your intended kindness. Heaven bear me witness! but I could not think of living dependent upon—upon—strangers! not—not for an instant. I will go away, just as soon as I am able, and will obtain work; and after I have (as far as mortal can) repaid you, for your generous hospitality, I will move onward to the fulfilment of my sad and unfortunate mission through life."

Dr. Brandenburg bowed his face in his hands. He had expected this: had feared that her pride would revolt at living upon the bounty of strangers, and he had, ere this, been troubled about the manner in which to surmount the difficulty her objection would place in his path. Through these weeks of sickness, her grace and her beauty had irresistibly won their way into the inmost sanctuary of his heart. He already felt that life would be only half a life with her away. Suddenly a happy thought struck him.

"Miss Rutherford, I have offered you my guidance, my assistance, my disinterested friendship. You reject them, and render me thus powerless to offer you my protection longer than you are an invalid guest here. However, my dear young lady, you shall always have my sympathy and my interest."

He rose as if to go. Pained, surprised, Electra

reached out her hand to detain him, when he added, after a moment's pause:

"I regret, for the sake of humanity, that I have so illy impressed you. I had hoped that you would allow me to serve you—to prove to you in some way that I felt a genuine interest in your success, and a sympathy for you in your misfortunes, but since you so entirely ignore my assistance, I can but yield—with an apology for the unpardonable assertion of my interest in you."

"Oh, sir, do not be indignant—do not be hasty; you misunderstand me. I am *not* ungrateful for your kindness. You have *not* unfavorably impressed me, but, oh! I cannot submit to foist my cares upon a stranger—one, too, who has already been so generous, but upon whom I have no claim."

"There you err, my dear young lady: you have that claim which the weak ever have upon the strong—women upon men. I am most happy to serve you."

"I can repay you nothing—positively nothing!"

"That does not matter! I ask nothing—want nothing."

"Ah! but, sir—I am a poor—homeless—"

"I offer you a home—everything. I am confident you will find your father! Till then, look upon me in the light of a guardian—"

"But should we fail—"

"That is something of which we should not allow ourselves to think. Never give up your hope! Even though Hope is deceitful sometimes—it never fails to lead its followers by agreeable and flowery paths. Now,

but one other word. Mrs. Barnaby has, during your illness, had your wardrobe prepared. Should everything not be according to requirements, you have but to consider me your banker, until I meet your father."

He carried her hand to his lips, and before she could demur, his footsteps were echoing along the corridor. The compact was made, and there was no retracting now.

Silently raising her heart in humblest thanksgiving, she burst into a passion of tears. After all her sorrow and despair, she had

"Touched God's right hand in the darkness,
And been lifted up and strengthened!"



CHAPTER VI.

FOR two months Miss Rutherford had been ensconced in her new house at Beechmoor. She was still an invalid, but had received several visits from Dr. Brandenburg's aristocratic neighbors, by whom she had been universally "approved." She was not a hundred miles away from home, yet she had grown up such a recluse, even in her own neighborhood, that her face was strange, and there was no fear of detection. The escapade of Miss Dudley from her grandmother was the current "nine days' wonder," and of course just as when the simoom passes over the desert, all travellers cast themselves in the dust until the dread presence of Azrael has passed, so each ear in the neighborhood inclined to the gossip Dame Rumor sent floating out from her dusty heart, like tantalizing, gauzy-winged *culex*, with never a thought that it might next fall to them to be "done to death by slanderous tongues."

Electra wore her new honors gracefully, admirably; and when the Dudleys were criticised with that acrimony and ungenerous condemnation that invariably attend woman's criticism upon woman, she only grew a shade paler, and sank back into a quiet and chilling hauteur that passed current for reserve. Dr. Brandenburg, at first trial, winced under these *on-dits*, as a victim of the

Auto-da-fé would shrink from torture, and fastening his dark eyes on Electra's cold face, whose icy lines gave no token of melting into emotion, he would take comfort; and because he saw her so brave, he finally grew indifferent to that hideous asteism of society—"which not being cured must be endured."

Fanny Moore laid violent siege to Lynn Evesham's heart; yet her progress in the *amour* absolutely counted for nothing when Electra chanced to be near.

Poor Evesham! he was madly in love with Electra, but was forced into a reserve, against which his passionate eyes often rebelled, when he remembered that he was Dr. Brandenburg's guest, and that he also had given unmistakable signs of devotion. But there was another and a more potent cause for his regret. An aristocratic Englishman cannot overlook rank, cannot conquer his pride of birth, or subdue his supreme faith in the potency of blue blood. Electra was—— He scarcely dared whisper the painful thought—even to himself. Things, however, in fashionable parlance, went on "smoothly" at Beechmoor.

One afternoon, as Electra sat in the library reading the daily paper, a chance paragraph caught her eye:

"TO ELECTRA: I am a wanderer. I have left home—friends—all—in wearying search for you. My throbbing heart and brain will know no quiet until I find you. In the name of that heaven where your sainted mother finds rest, will you not give me some clue, that I may seek you?
W. H."

The paper fell quivering from the young girl's hands. She knew the source from whence this publication emanated, and upon her sensitive nature it inflicted deep, intense pain. The only home she had ever known—the only being in it who had ever brought a gleam of sunshine across her more than orphan life—came before her, a participant in the great grief of her existence. Tears rose from her heart to her eyes, because, of all the household that should have held her dear, the one to whom she had given least cause to become so, was now a wanderer on her path, to find and throw around her that protecting love which had cruelly been denied her by those from whom it would have been grateful. She scarcely liked William Hayden—could never love him; and yet he was unhappy because she was homeless—unhappy for her! There it was, in clear, unblemished print: "I am a wanderer. In the name of that heaven where your sainted mother is—but one word!"

How mysterious, how wonderful beyond human comprehension is the eclecticism of love? There are both men and women who are attractive, intelligent, beautiful, and yet their hearts turn to some plainer mortals rather than each other, or else feast upon themselves while they murmur in half-apologetic tones that quotation on poor, abused Dr. Fell, who was condemned without a jury. Now Electra was different from other girls. Her heart was controlled by the deductions of logic, and not drawn along by silken cords over the cridavana meads of life, where Love sits in

royal magnificence to receive the hearts of awakened womanhood. She had set up an idol—an imaginary paragon, before which she bent in full and sincere homage, and she was resolved to yield her affection to none save the reality who would one day personify that ideal.

Dr. Brandenburg came through the shadowy curtains of the window near which Electra sat, and found her, with a bitter expression of suffering on her pale face, gazing upon the paper at her feet. He quickly raised it from the floor, and rapidly cast his eyes over its columns, to detect if it contained the cause of her agitation. She took it from him, pointed to the paragraph, and, leaning back, covered her face with her hands.

"Is this your lover?" he asked, in a hurried voice.

"Oh, no, sir."

"Has he ever been?"

"My grandmother thought so; he never betrayed it himself."

Dr. Brandenburg breathed freely again.

"Ah, my kind friend," Electra continued, in a low, sad tone, while the tears which had been gathering to her eyes fell over her cheek, "he was my comforter, and ever lavished kindness and affection upon me, when my poor heart was pining and breaking in silent anguish for love and sympathy. Mine was a sad, loveless life, and you know such affection as he gave could not fall on sterile soil. The sun and dew may brighten the flowers, but kind words and tenderness can brighten and bless the heart even more. I can never forget

William, can never cease to be grateful for his tender interest, even though it must ever go unrequited with an emotion warmer than my gratitude."

"You forget though, my little friend, when you talk about the eternity of emotion, the sentiment: 'There is one thing eternal in God's universe, and that is change; mutability is the sole permanence.' And I fancy *that* permanence is one over which your sex delight to use entire and graceful sway," said Dr. Brandenburg, leaning upon the back of the chair in which she sat, and looking down upon her sunny head, with a tenderness which would surely have betrayed his attachment had she only glanced in his eyes—but she did not.

"Do you think," he asked, since she vouchsafed no reply, "that when the world takes you by the hand that you will value that protecting love as much as you do to-day?"

"Yes, sir," she replied, promptly, "I will always treasure the same warm gratitude for him that my heart holds now. And a knowledge that he suffers—and suffers *for me*, gives me inexpressible pain."

"You must not allow it to so grieve you. It is but a little thing, and you must lift yourself from the shadows of the past, and look only to the future—where happiness awaits you."

"Ah, my friend," she said, "who knows—but God—what *sorrow* that future holds for me, in lieu of the pleasures your philanthropic heart tempts you to portray?"

"At least we can *anticipate* the enjoyment. And if there *are* clouds and misfortune it is a wise and good God who has hidden the misery and disappointment under a silvery veil of hope," he replied.

"I thank you, oh, my friend, for these kindly, hopeful words, and they will cheer and soothe and strengthen me when Despair clutches at my heart like a lean and hungry savage. I have many dark hours, but I shall try to believe that this shadowing is not a mystery, but a *means* chosen by God to make the most of me!"

Electra rose and stood beside him, her earnest eyes upraised to his calm, noble face.

"My child," he said, "it may seem too long a dwelling upon a painful subject to thus refer to your misfortune, but it is as well perhaps to contemplate life's darker page, sometimes. You must remember that suffering is not a dark thread to be wound now and then through a warp of dazzling brightness, but it is woven like a shadow through the whole texture of existence. Nor is it incidental: it was designed for us; it is one of God's purposes; its omnipotence for good is almost incalculable—and though we may make logical deductions from every circumstance of life, we do not thoroughly comprehend the infinity of eternity—nor the Omniscient and Omnipresent, till we comprehend the divine purpose of endurance, suffering, and sorrow!"

A silence fell over them. Electra turned to go, but he rested his hand on her arm:

"This letter—you will answer it?"

"I should like to do so very much, if it were possible. I think it best, perhaps."

"Write it, then, and I will take it to the post-station myself, to-morrow, and drop it in the office, and it cannot be traced."

Moving slowly and sorrowfully to the desk, she caught up a pen and wrote:

"W. H. :—I thank you for your affectionate remembrance, but regret that you force me to remind you that a dark gulf separates us; when it is bridged, we may meet again—not till then.
ELECTRA."

Folding, enveloping, and directing these lines, she handed the paper to Dr. Brandenburg, and hastened from the room.

In the hall she came upon Mr. Evesham and Fanny, intently engaged in a game of "Battledore." Each was excited, and certainly a more graceful, elegant couple of combatants could not be found.

"What is the forfeit?" asked Electra.

"A kiss!" cried Lynn Evesham, his fine face all glowing with enjoyment.

"A ride!" laughed Fanny, though evidently well-pleased with Mr. Evesham's saucy speech.

To and fro the shuttle flew.

"Ninety-nine, one hundred, one—two—three—four," shouted Fanny, springing with wild excitement to strike the "bird." It passed over her head.

"The forfeit! the forfeit!" cried Lynn Evesham;

but Fanny, who had observed the deference Evesham ever paid to Electra, threw her arms around the surprised lady's neck, and clung to her, apparently in perfect desperation.

"Oh, Miss Rutherford, make him behave!" she cried, laughingly, hiding her face on Electra's shoulder. Lynn Evesham, aglow with excitement, never paused to think of what he was about to do, nor what influence an instant's action would have over his whole after-life; but with a merry shout of laughter, threw his arms around both girls, saying:

"If Miss Rutherford protects you, she must necessarily share your defeat;" and, with this announcement, he bent to kiss Fanny; but Electra, with the quick blood indignantly mantling her cheeks, bent, at the same moment, to glide from his embrace, and received the kiss upon her forehead. Lynn Evesham's arms fell; his great black eyes looked down into Electra's hazel ones, which were now dimmed with angry tears: her lips were writhing and white.

"I did not think you would dare!" she said, in such a still, scornful way, and turning she fled up the broad flight of stairs.

Lynn was maddened by her manner of proud superiority—maddened by the kiss he had bestowed upon her, and without pausing for a moment's thought, he sprang after her, and reached her just as she rested her hand on the knob of her room-door.

"You did not think I'd *dare*?" he said, with a blaze of passion in his eyes.

"No," she replied, haughtily; "I did not dream you would *dare*!"

"Well, Miss Rutherford, you have yet to learn that I am a man who *dares* all things—even this!"

He threw his arm around her waist, drew her face close to his breast, and murmured in a voice of melting tenderness, while he pressed quick, warm kisses on her lips:

"Because I love you, I brave you; because you are mine—mine by the cry of my heart that claims you. I seal your lips with the impress of ownership; you will not let another break it. Go!"

He opened his arms, releasing her from his embrace. "Go! you are mine now, my darling. I do not fear ever to lose you!"

Electra, pale, and trembling with a strange excitement, staggered from him, opened her door, entered, and closed it after her. She stood in the centre of her chamber, like a statue of pulseless marble, bewildered at herself, startled at what had so unexpectedly occurred. Lynn Evesham loved her, and she—what were her emotions? She knew not, but this strange, passionate declaration made the blood rush through her veins like molten lava, she realized that a storm was sweeping over her—a storm of impulse more terrible to resist than the dread and pestilent breath of the Sirocco of the East, or the Euroclydon that sweeps its cold wings over the Northern sea. Staggering to an ottoman she threw herself upon it, hiding the light from her eyes, and there she lay for hours in a vague, dreamy bewilderment.

And Lynn?—he turned and descended the stairs, but no Fanny was visible. He heard her though, telling her mother:

“One thing is certain—I shall never play *Battledore* with HIM again.”

With a low laugh he caught up his hat and darted out in the keen, autumn air.

“Well,” he said, as he strode along down the terraces, and on through the “Big Gate” to the Park—where he had first seen her.—“I have done it now! and thank God, at any rate, she knows that I love her. But, oh! if she despised me! No! that could not be. In spite of her anger her eyes softened, and her lips trembled when I kissed her. Oh, Electra! Electra! my own Electra! Ayé! she *is* mine, by all that is pure and holy. I have set the seal of my love on the coral of her lips, and *she is* MINE!”

The brook, fringed now with sere grasses and dead leaves, purled musically along, retelling to him the story of the weary nymph who had slumbered there, and plunged in her pretty feet for its ripples to kiss, three short months before; and he, engrossed with it all, sat down in a rapturous dream, to recall how he had borne her glorious weight in his arms the length of that great meadow, and over the terraces; how he had touched her sweet, pale face, holy and tender as a “saint’s upturned in devotion;” how he had watched beside her sleeping, and soothed her in her delirium, and oh, through everything, how he loved her!

The yellow sunset faded, and the frettings in the tree-

tops disappeared, too, leaving the gray lace-work against the leaden blue of a November sky, before he rose to return to the house.

Fanny met him in the hall, looking bright and fresh as the blush of Spring.

“Ah, truant,” she cried, “where have you been? Here tea has been waiting for you for the last half-hour; the rolls have spoiled, the coffee, too; and I am so hungry, that I have been tempted to go, like a naughty puss, and lap in the cream behind the closet-door. Come, confess! Where have you been?”

“In the Park,” he replied, smiling.

“What doing?”

“Thinking.”

“Well, upon my word, that is rich! I’ll propose to Electra to kiss you again, shortly, if that is the effect osculation produces upon your cerebrum! See if I don’t!”

Lynn Evesham laughed aloud.

“Of what were you thinking?—the man in the moon?” She looked so saucy, so winning, so pretty, that Lynn Evesham would have been more than man to restrain the gallantry upon his clear-cut lips. Stepping a foot closer, he took her hand, and looking in the bright, upturned face, he said, softly:

“I was dreaming of a beautiful woman. You cannot blame me?”

More can be said by a gesture, or a look, than words can ever express; and it was natural that Fanny should take the man’s manner for earnestness. Breaking

away from him without reply, she opened the supper-room door, where Dr. Brandenburg and Mrs. Moore already awaited their entrance.

"Where is Electra?" asked Fanny, gayly.

"She declines coming down this evening," said Mrs. Moore.

"Why! Mr. Evesham, I am afraid '*Battledore*' and *forfeits* are not healthy amusements. I shall withdraw my intended proposition, since its acceptance might do more damage!" said Fanny, saucily turning her head on one side.

None noticed the remark. Dr. Brandenburg looked anxious and unhappy; Mrs. Moore, calm and stately; and Mr. Evesham apparently as still and cold as a statue of Mors.

"And Love—a light impulse alive on the air,
Flitted here, flitted there, like a bee on a beam,
Flitted, folded for aye in his own happy dream."



CHAPTER VII.

ELECTRA took breakfast in her own room the following morning, rising two hours later than any one else. Lynn Evesham roamed around like one demented; he teased Fanny, quizzed her mother, and tormented the voice of his flute. The whole world had changed in a night to him; yesterday he had been joyous, and to-day his soul had sunk deep into the slough of despond; nothing but gloom greeted him. Fanny pronounced him "inconsistent,"—her mother silently condemned him as "brusque" and self-sufficient, and he *felt* miserable. He was in fact none of these. His brain had colored the media of his emotions, and he was no more to blame than the wind is to blame for blowing where God listeth that it shall go—sometimes bearing perfume and sunshine on its aerial pinions, and again the silver frost and chill of a winter's night. Finally, he tried to read, but after the attempt being continued for the duration of five minutes, in sheer desperation he threw the book out of the window; then ashamed of his ill-temper, went down stairs and picked it up again. Returning, he caught a glimpse of Electra's gray morning-wrapper, with its crimson facings, and heard her voice singing softly that capricious, exquisite "*Awakening*" of Heinrich Heine. He bounded up the stairs two steps at a

time, but she had entered her room and closed the door before he reached it. Disappointed, he waited until dinner was announced. She was there, but for all the notice she bestowed upon him, she might have dined in Kamschatka. As she entered, he saluted her.

"Good-afternoon, Miss Rutherford. We began to fear you had deserted us."

"A truce to compliments, Mr. Evesham. I am flattered that my absence has been noticed, but indisposition alone has given my friends cause to so kindly remind me of it," she said gently, while the clear, unwavering tones in which she uttered the words chilled him to the heart. At table, he sat beside her; she accepted his courtesies, but with a frigid hauteur, which said plainly as words could have done—"You force me to it, sir."

As the ladies passed into the parlor, he held the door open, whispering, as she swept by him, with her regal air, "Electra, forgive me."

The winning tenderness of his voice shook her to the very soul; but she passed on without even vouchsafing a glance to evince that he had been heard. Lynn Evesham regretted that momentary passionate yielding to his heart, more than words could ever express for him. He had sown seed in that impetuous, pitiless storm of emotion, which might spring up tares, or flowers. They had fallen into the crevices of a girl's heart, who ever heard the lapping of sorrow's waves against the lone gray crags of her life: a little lichen of hope clung to these crags, and it might be that in its

warmth the tiny seed would fructuate, and, rising and blossoming, would cast to the winds the sweets of a Pæstum rose. Meantime he could only "trust to luck." After dinner he caught up his hat, and went out into the open air; the house, the faces surrounding him, seemed stifling him. And it was after sunset when he returned. Just as he entered, Mrs. Moore, who was reclining upon a sofa near the piano, said—

"Fan, darling, do sing that pretty '*Dreaming*' you learned the other day. I am charmed with it."

"Yes, Miss Fanny, do sing it," said Lynn Evesham, in a mechanical way, as he dropped down into a chair beside her.

Lightly the obliging girl's fingers rippled over the ivory keys of the piano, and she sang in a voice of sweetest melody, fixing her blue eyes earnestly on Mr. Evesham's dark, cold face while she did so, but was unrewarded by a single glance in return. The lamps had not been lighted in the parlor, and the gray twilight shone timidly in, as if half afraid to tell of night's creeping shadows. Electra stood beside the window, one cheek pressed against the pane, her hands grasping the heavy curtains' sweeping folds, her beautiful willowy form displayed to the most exquisite advantage against the clear background. Lynn Evesham rose, and crossing the room, stood by her, took with a light grasp the drapery just above where she held it, and quickly slipping his hand downwards, closed it like a vice over hers, remarking in the gentlest manner possible:

"That is very sweet, Miss Fanny. I remember seeing a little poem the other day something similar, and I think quite as pretty. It looks like snow out!"

"Let us have the poem, do, Mr. Evesham," said Fanny, joining him at the window. He made way for her. Then stepping to the right of Electra, that he might study the expression of her face, and still clasping the little hand hidden in the folds of the curtain, he murmured in a tone of the most earnest and passionate pleading:

"The sweet south wind, with perfume heavy-laden,
Came lightly tripping by,
And kissed a pretty, unsuspecting maiden—
Why not I?
If nature, flirting with her lovely sister,
Crept still and slyly nigh,
And all unbidden like a fairy kissed her—
Why not I?
Sweet sleeping, dreaming on the maiden's breast
The summer roses lie:
Who shall dream sweetly where the roses rest?
Why not I?"

"I declare, Mr. Evesham, you could make love charmingly, if you only cared to exercise your talent. That exquisite gem is so appropriate on the lips of a man who knows *how* to kiss unsuspecting maidens!" said Fanny Moore, with a little malicious laugh.

Electra made a quick motion to move away, but she was hemmed in by Fanny and Lynn Evesham; and besides, that hand still firmly clasped her own. She raised her eyes with a flash of angry defiance, to meet his

earnest brow and anxious glance. Sick to the soul with excitement, she was ready to faint.

"Please, let me go by. I am so weak," she sighed pitifully. Lynn Evesham released her hand, and reaching out, wheeled an armchair to the window, saying, in a tender yet resolute way she found it impossible to resist—

"Sit down, then, we cannot spare you. And now, Miss Fanny, if you would give us some of those quaint, German ballads, in your sweet rich voice, this twilight hour would be enrapturing.

"Would you really care to hear me sing?" asked Fanny, softly.

"Indeed I would! I enjoy nothing more than the music of your voice."

And then, as Fanny glided away to the piano, the gallant, with no longer the idle, bantering tone and air which he generally assumed toward her, but with passionate earnestness in face and gesture, and a sweet, strange lowering of his rich voice, asked—"Now tell me why I am so coldly treated?"

But no reply came.

"Are you angry because I overpowered you with such a pitiless storm of passion? Ah! my little Oriole—my queen-lily and rose in one! You are to blame for it—you made me do it."

Still no reply. Electra only leaned her head forward on her hand, to screen her face.

"Electra, my darling, you must not tempt me to act otherwise than as I feel toward you. And oh! it so

wounds me for you to treat me thus coldly. Do you not know I love you? Ah! Electra, I have loved you since I first held you to my heart; and more, darling, you love me! Look at me!—look in my eyes. Ah, well, you will one day be sorry for all this, dear.”

He bent over her hand, which rested on the arm of her chair, and pressed his lips to it repeatedly.

“You are cruel,” sighed Electra; “pray leave me.”

“That I will not! If I am cruel you set the example. How can you expect to subdue me by such stern and rigid measures? You cannot bring me to terms with the sword! Don’t try to humble me. If I have offended you, I repent it sincerely. But oh, Electra, is it then a sin to love you?”

Electra raised her clear, sad eyes to his pleading face. An instant only—for a longer gazing upon their liquid light would have allowed her heart the supremacy over her mind, and this she did not wish. Her tones were firm, modulated, and cold: “If you are not to be conquered by the sword, neither am I. I am not ‘stern,’ nor am I ‘rigid.’ I mete to you that strict justice which you deserve. Rest assured, your influence cannot mislead me! I recognize in you, only my enemy; for you do not treat the unprotected orphan—the parentless waif—as you do the pretty heiress, surrounded by the adulating friends which wealth and position alone can command. I do not wish it—do not expect it! I require you, however, as the guest of my friend, to treat me with proper courtesy—a courtesy due to me as a woman—whatever my condition—or else ignore

my presence entirely. It is neither in a Christian nor a gentlemanly spirit that you thus harass me. If you repent of having offended me—as you surely *did* do—prove it, by not attempting to force me to heap coals of fire upon your head when I have no inclination so to do. If you are a man—and human—the spirit which prompts a kindness to you, alone gives the deed value in your eyes. Let me pass.”

She rose to go, but he put out his hand to restrain her. His pride was all gone. She had spoken bitter words, but he was keen-sighted enough to see that they were forced.

“You shall not! you will not go, when I ask you to stay! Let me explain to you the purity, the strength, the fervor of my love.”

She only shook herself free from his detaining grasp and passed out of his reach.

“Why, Miss Rutherford, you are certainly not going? Well! that *is* complimentary to Fanny’s musical ability,” exclaimed Mrs. Moore.

“Only to order the lamps to be lighted, and the embers replenished,” replied Electra, as she swept across the tufted carpet with the grace of an empress, and went out from the presence of the only living mortal who had power to waken the melodious strains of love in her heart. But she did not return to the sitting-room that night. And when her commands were fulfilled by the servant, Mrs. Moore took up her *crochetting*, and Mr. Evesham and Fanny opened the backgammon-board, with as much nonchalant indifference as if she were not in existence.

Electra sat reading in her room, but she was not doing so understandingly. Lynn Evesham's splendid eyes glanced up from every leaf, and she was unhappy, for down in her heart she felt—she feared that Lynn was gaining the supremacy. What had *she* to do with loving and being loved—a waif on the world with a stain upon her name? Were it otherwise, this man who filled her thoughts and troubled her peace, might be the despot of her affections, which he had proclaimed himself in the vehemence of his feelings. “But no!” she exclaimed, “not until that man is found who drove my mother to a grave over which calumny flits, can Lynn Evesham turn the purpose to which I have vowed to devote my life.”

She was solemnly in earnest, but woman's heart cannot always be kept beneath the rod of reason. Those who make great sacrifices in the hope of immediate reward, generally chew the dry and bitter cud of disappointment. When a limb is amputated from a quivering body, alive to the keenest anguish—the grating of the saw—the gleam and sharp slit of the scalpel, is not all that is to be borne;—there are after-seasons of pain and suffering that must inevitably be endured. It is the same with an idol of clay—cast down by some sudden storm—shattered and scattered in the dust—it requires time for the most humbling reflection, before its votaries can be convinced of the reality. And these “after-seasons of pain” came to Electra in spite of the exalted sacrifice she was making to love and honor. However, human actions ought, in strict justice, never to be esti-

mated by their results. These quiet victories over *self* are braver and nobler far than worldly triumphs, though not heralded with acclamations, as are the victories of brilliant and heroic armies.

The midnight moon had almost passed the meridian of her march over the azure field of heaven, radiant with her thousands of sentinel stars, when Electra, going to her window to close her shutters, saw, leaning on a marble myrtle-vase, a tall form which she instantly recognized as Lynn Evesham's; he was kissing the shaft of light that fell from the window and turned the glistening edges of the myrtle leaves to gold.

Her shadow fell upon him. He looked up. Actuated by a sudden indefinable emotion, she drew back, but not until she saw him stretch out his arms, uplift his eager face, then drop it down among the myrtle leaves, and a moaning sigh fell like a sob of reproach on her ear.

She closed the shutters, and left him alone with the shadows of night—but the shadow on her own soul was darker still.



CHAPTER VIII.

THE lily-footed snow was trailing her spotless mantle over the earth. Dr. Brandenburg could see the air alive with the tiny flakes, as he sat near the window of his study conversing with his friend, Lynn Evesham. The latter had just announced his intended departure for New York, and the doctor was demurring to the determination. His usually clear brow was clouded, and an expression of pain hovered around his firmly-cut lips, as he exclaimed :

"Why, Evesham, this is a very sudden determination ; you promised me all the fall and winter, and here you are talking of going away the first fine snow ! I cannot agree to it."

"I know I promised you, but unforeseen circumstances will prevent me from fulfilling it. I have been very happy here, and I shall live with a hope of entertaining you with reciprocal hospitality in my own English home."

"'Unforeseen circumstances' is just the part I do not like," said the Doctor, interrupting him. "See here, Evesham, I can probe your secret—you are in love !"

Lynn blushed to his temples, then as suddenly paled again.

"Is it Fanny or—Electra ?" and the last name was uttered with a slight gasp.

"Nonsense, Tom ; do I act like a man in love ?"

"How do men 'in love' usually act ?"

Dr. Brandenburg flushed painfully as he asked the question.

"Well, Tom, I should think—they act as you do. You—"

Before he could terminate his speech, the door suddenly opening disclosed Fanny Moore, her mother, and Electra.

"Are we admissible ?" asked Fanny. "Or, like St. Senanus on his sacred isle, do you exclaim,

'And I have sworn this sainted sod

Shall ne'er by woman's feet be trod ?'

Only you cannot very well swear so, since this is a floor."

"Come in, by all means," replied the Doctor, with his accustomed gallantry. "But allow me to crave your forgiveness for my inability to dispel the fumes of the 'noxious weed' from the atmosphere."

"He is talking of tobacco," said Fanny, turning to the other ladies, as if she occupied the position of interpreter.

When they were all seated around the hearth, save Electra, who stood beside Mr. Evesham's chair, Fanny commenced :

"Tom," she said, "I have an idea in my head."

"Oh, Fan ! *have* you ? Well, keep it ! hold it fast ! Why, how astonishing !" replied Dr. Tom, excitedly.

Fanny admitted that the laugh was at her expense, and forthwith proceeded.

"The snow is deep enough for sleighing, is it not?"

"Yes."

"Well, I came to the country to lend you the *light* of my countenance, and I want you to give me the *heavy* of your purse."

"Hello, puss! so that is the mountain, is it, that you made out of a mole-hill? Go on, my female Sisypus, and let us see the mouse!"

"Exactly," said Fanny; "I want a sleighing-party to go to L——, and there have a grand masquerade; what do you say?"

"What does Miss Rutherford think?" asked the Doctor.

"I think I should like it very much, indeed," said Electra, with a radiant face; "I never attended a masquerade, but Fanny has been telling me about them, and I cannot fancy anything more delightful."

"And does Aunt Lucy like the idea, too?"

"Oh, I enjoy everything that pleases the young people," said Mrs. Moore, smilingly.

"Well, then, it is settled. But Lynn, here, does not take any part in our plans; he talks of returning to New York, and sailing thence to England."

"England? England?" cried the ladies Moore; but Electra, standing with her arm upon Mr. Evesham's chair, only glanced at him, then into the fire, and sighed.

Michelet says:—"Woman, above the man's voice

and the bird's song, has a mystic language with which she intermingles this voice or this song; it is the sigh—the impassioned breath. Though it may just make itself felt, the heart is at once moved. What manly harangue can produce such effect as a woman's silence? Thoughts similar to these floated through Evesham's brain, when he caught Electra's sigh of pain. Already he was half resolved to stay.

"Oh! the thought must not be entertained one single instant! What would we do without you, pray tell me?" said Fanny, looking pitiful and disconsolate in the extreme.

"No, that it must not," said Mrs. Moore. "Come, Miss Rutherford, lend your gentle voice to our petitions!"

Now, Electra knew that it was her duty to herself to remain silent, but the eager uplifting of that handsome face, the earnest eyes looking into her own with resistless magnetism, the flush on the broad brow—conquered her, and in a voice exquisitely low and sweet, she said:

"Indeed, I do sincerely hope Mr. Evesham has only been testing us to discover how much he will be missed, when he thinks of going in reality."

Lynn Evesham was charmed—delighted. He blushed and stammered like a school-boy, and consented to remain. Electra was touched to the heart by this unfeigned love which the man had shown; and the tears sprang to her eyes, as she turned away and caught up a book to hide her agitation. "Oh! to be cherished

for one's self alone ! To owe the love that is given us, to nothing that changing seasons give or take—to know that while I am pure and upright as God created me, I will be loved tenderly and truly ! To revel in such possessions, what would I not risk—dare do !” she murmured to herself, passionately. “But wherefore do I dream ? My burden is lifted up, and those things which brighten, and beautify, and bless the lives of other women, can never be mine ! My love—

—“‘But go to ! thy love
Shall chant itself, its own beatitudes,
After its own life working. A child's kiss
Set on the sighing lips shall make thee glad ;
A poor man served by thee shall make thee rich ;
A sick man helped by thee shall make thee strong.’”

The remainder of that day was passed in writing invitations, preferring and rejecting. Many quaint witticisms, and a vast amount of repartee between Fanny and Dr. Tom, celebrated the preparations. No one was to know of the other's dominoes. Orders were sent into L—— for each dress to be prepared, and labelled with the names of the owners, that no mistake might occur in unpacking.

Beechmoor was quite on the *qui vive*, and not a shadow marred the general joy. Even Lynn's heart was unclouded. But it was very soon a source of dissatisfaction to him, and manifest delight to Dr. Brandenburg, when it was decided that Electra was to accompany the latter in the sleigh-ride to L——. “To

share honors,” as Fanny sarcastically termed it, it was agreed that Lynn should be her escort on the return.

“To be able to always claim the same lady, I would be willing to go to masquerades all my life,” said Dr. Brandenburg, naively, as he arranged the “buffalo” around Electra, and placed the little carriage-stove under her feet, preparatory to starting. Fifteen miles, with the woman he loved best seated beneath the same “robe”—he could scarcely conceive of more consummate happiness !

“Ah, Doctor, how weary you would become of me ! You would discover then, just what a prosy, humdrum creature I am !” said Electra, laughing cheerily.

The Doctor was incredulous.

“Prosy, humdrum—you ? A lover of the beautiful ?”

“Ay !” she said, her sweet face lighting up suddenly ; “not a change of nature but I revel in its beauties. And, ah, sometimes it is inexpressibly comforting to me, in my dark hours, to realize that my olive-faced mother, Cybele, never ceases to love me ! And when others deem me ‘marbled’ into repose—and perhaps I seem so—one hour of unrestrained communion with her does me more good than many sermons, and melts the icy incrustations from my heart, as the sunshine dispels the frost. When tempted to cry out : What would God have this evil do for me ? what kernel lies hidden under this husk ? what good can spring from this ? what joy from such anguish ?—invariably comes the solemn answer from the meads and moun-

tains, hills and dales; from the birds, the flowers, the winds—all—all in one enrapturing, glorious antiphony: 'It is God's will.' And I am comforted, as Zachariah of old, and with unsealed lips my sorrow pours forth, and turns to praise and gratitude for the love the good God bestows upon one so infinitely unworthy His tender care, yet whom He counts as 'one of His flock.' Oh! my friend, what divine balm is poured upon the bruised heart, when one realizes that he may, if worthy, when he passes into the sabanas of Eternity, look upon the Son and Saviour, and swell the chorus of the angelic choir, which ever sings *His* glorious praise. Oh! to think that, weak, erring mortal as I am, I possess a soul of origin divine, which shall never know oblivion, nor taste of death! How terrible to feel a harsh and cruel fate compressing it into prescribed limits!"

"Not so, my child; suffering nourishes the tenderest sympathies of our nature; it awakens in us a consciousness of our own powers, stimulates our energies, and at the same time impresses upon us the necessity of the meekest dependence on God; it teaches us to prize the enjoyments of earth, and at the same time lifts us from mere earthly things to a knowledge that our life here is transitory—our life *there*, eternal. *Fate* has naught to do with our sorrows; 'God chasteneth those whom He loveth.' Remember this, always, my dear child. You are wrong to be so sad," he continued, after a pause, when he saw the tears glistening on her cheeks; "wrong to thus wait, leaning on the

darkness. Your hands were made to pluck life's purple clusters, your fresh, young heart created to grow joyous in life's golden sunshine; and, even if this were not so, you should struggle to grow brave and patient, and say unto the chill winds: 'Blight, if you will, the fair earth-blossoms on my pathway, and snatch from me everything that humanity craves, yet the sick soul, like a proud bird of the mountain, soars aloft, and gazes down pityingly upon the poor heart, growing dark beneath the storm-clouds of life.'"

His eyes, those kindly, brown eyes—so full of love and truth—were looking off in the distance; the firm profile, the thin, proud lips, the lofty brow, all wore an exalted look that Electra had never seen there before, and she asked herself: "How could I, for a moment, have thought this great, this good man homely?"

"You have much fortitude, patience, and faith," he continued, "and these admirable qualities particularly attracted my attention when you bore the calumnies of those persons who visited you as my ward Miss Rutherford, and abused you as your identical self—Electra Dudley!"

"Oh, Doctor," said Electra, blushing, "your sympathy is very sweet to me, and I am indeed grateful, was doubly so then, though I felt it unworthy myself to speak, or even think of the petty annoyances of those whose lives, when told, will be nothing more than the babbling of a summer brook. There is a charity in contempt that, indeed, suffereth much? Wherefore alarm a neighborhood to battle against a gnat?"

"You are a brave, a noble woman!"

Dr. Brandenburg turned to Electra with love beaming so triumphantly in his face, that her modest eyes veiled themselves from his own.

"I shall never cease to thank God," he continued, "for the happiness He has bestowed upon me, in permitting me even to know such a woman. Electra! there are pretty women all over the world, but I never beheld the *divinity* of beauty as in your superior self!"

He spoke fervently, and the smile she gave him was all the guerdon she granted to his silent avowal of love.

Lightly along the road they sped, interchanging noble and beautiful thoughts. At last other sleighs jingled their merry silver bells, and prancing steeds, and bright tassels and reins; rich robes and happy faces, gay laughter and cheery voices, bows, recognitions, and snatches of song and *bon mots* sped past like the breath of the wind, and the masqueraders were at their destination.

"Here at last," sighed Dr. Brandenburg.

"Here at last!" laughed Lynn Evesham, stepping forward to assist Electra to alight.



CHAPTER IX.

IT was a beautiful scene; such a one as we read of in fairy tales, yet which we scarcely conceive to be absolute reality. A masquerade! How the very name conjures before youthful eyes the lights, the music, the rich robing, and the *petits-soins*! Harlequins danced with queens; empresses trailed the length of their rustling brocades beside fruit-venders and image-merchants; lords and counts, with their "legions of honor" attached to their coats; generals and subordinates in the full blaze of their martial grandeur, gayly flirted with peasant and flower girls; Charlotte Cordays, forgetful of their destinies, and Joan d'Arcs of their glory, sipped ices and creams, and nibbled dainty bits of cake; cardinals gallantly embraced ballet-girls in the bewildering maze of the waltz; and nuns, without sense of impropriety, sat down with imps and His Satanic Majesty himself, to games of hazard, with *bonbons* for stakes! Ladies in spectacles, caps, and false fronts, deemed themselves *au fait* in their half-century-old toilettes, when they simpered behind their large Spanish fans at the "would-be gallant" youths, prematurely sporting eye-glasses, moustaches, and gold-headed "rattans." Beatrice Cenci, with their mysterious eyes; dusky-haired Madonnas, and Catherine De Medicis. Borgias, gentle Medoras, dark-eyed

Haidees, voluptuous Gulbeyezes, and light-footed Gulanars, mingled in the dance, coquetted beneath the flashing chandeliers, promenaded in the vestibules, and clinked champagne-glasses, and sipped Curaçoa with dwarfs, dominoes, daring Don Juans, gloomy-looking Corsairs, Giaours, Tartars, Laras, belted Earls, Lucifers, and Doges. A moving mass of silks, satins, velvets, and laces, of flashing gems and funny masks, of tall forms and short ones, of large ones and lithe ones—of laughter, of song, of dance and wine—of stupidity and *belles-esprit*—of blushes and frowns, of covert sneers and loving words, of sarcasm and admiration, of struggling tears, of heart-achings and disappointments, of smiles, and joy, and triumph. Such the masquerade!

Electra, as *Anaxarete*, was enchanted with everything and everybody, and highly amused to find herself constantly pursued by an imperial form, which, as that of *Iphis*, offered its allegiance of life and limb. Her gold-hemmed robe, her little sandalled feet, her curls floating below her embroidered zone, her beautiful form, were inspirations of which he availed himself with apt and charming eloquence. She recognized beneath this disguise the trembling earnestness of Dr. Brandenburg; and although shocked upon discovering the reality of what she had hitherto only feared, it caused her to think more deeply than she would otherwise have done. Cold and fair as *Anaxarete* of old, she listened to his tender, passionate words, and was silent.

"Can it be, then," said the trembling voice, "that I am cursed with your scorn? Must my words ever fail

to melt the iciness of your heart? Can it be that a jealous and pitiless God resents that I worship at another shrine, and with your contempt and indifference punishes me?"

"Hush!" whispered Electra; "such words are sacrilegious! worship a woman—a weak woman—in lieu of the true God! Can I believe in the truth or sanity of a man who broaches such a theory? I have too much respect for you, to suppose that you intended to convey the seeming meaning of your remark."

She laid her pearl-tinted hand on his arm with a gentle, reproachful gesture. He went on with his appeal, apparently regardless of her words—only that he placed his firm clasp over her fingers.

"I love you. I ask you fervently to forget the world, its praise, its admiration, its adulation. Come to the heart of a man who has sought, until now, for some strong influence to command his nature. You have entered the inner sanctuary which has heretofore been sacred. You are surprised—so am I; but with the frankness of my nature, I tell mine to her who ought to know it!"

In his excitement, he had drawn her into the shadow of the window-drapery, and lifted his mask. Electra also lifted hers; and they stood gazing in each other's eyes—she pallid, as with great fear, and he trembling with intense and ungovernable emotion.

"You forget," she murmured, in an agitated voice, "my position in your house as a dependent on your bounty. Oh, how bitterly do I regret that you have

spoken these words!" she clasped her hands—a gesture of silent anguish—and bowed her face over them.

"Do not do so, Electra; as well, if not better now, than later. As my wife, we can prosecute the search for your father, and if he is never found, my love will shield you from the scourge of the world's scorn and envy's choking poison."

"If he is never found, I will never marry," she replied, in a voice so firm that it caused his heart to almost die within him; but he continued, regardless of what she had asserted:

"Electra, to me you are an ideal of purity and beauty. The first and only woman I have loved, or ever can love! Give me your heart as a reward for my affection! Come, little one! Here! here! I will dispel all the sadness of your life, I will fold you tenderly to my heart—you have no idea *how* tenderly! I will kiss away your tears—will make you happy—oh! so happy, my darling! Will you come?"

He held out his arms, and his face yearned full of tenderness, but Electra never moved, though her agitation was plainly visible.

"You make me feel my situation with more force than you can imagine. I know now, that I was wrong to stay; but oh! I was so young—so inexperienced—so wretched. I looked upon you in the light of a brother—a guardian; but, oh! that you should love me!"

"I would to God that I had the eloquence to tell you *how* I love you! If I have startled you with the

vehemence of my declaration—wait—let my words lie buried in your pure heart, and answer me not until they rise again with a spiritual body of sweet, tender, living memories, in garments of light that only Love can weave."

"And if they rise not?" said Electra, sadly.

He turned away to conceal his anguish at the simple truth; but conquering himself, he took her hand in his, and bent toward her—longing, yet not daring, to clasp her to his throbbing heart, and answered in a low, faint voice:

"If they rise not, may this offering of undying love rest like a balm of fragrant flowers upon the wounds your heart may yet endure. Little one, I have spoken rapidly; my heart only has found voice; listen to its music and you will be satisfied. I have given you this power over my life; use it for your own happiness; if you make yourself independent of me, while you are alone some dark, rainy day, ask yourself the question: 'Is there any one who could relieve this sad heart—this loneliness? bring smiles of peace and beauty to my face?' Remember me then, as waiting patiently, but hopefully, for the whisper gentle—'Take me, love me, I am thine.' I shall never give you up, until another man calls you by that holiest of names—'wife.' And oh! day of deathless woe would that be to me!"

Electra drew aside the curtain, flashing her eyes over the gay groups in the saloon. Down the length of the room she saw Lynn Evesham. The assemblage had all unmasked. His dark eyes were roving restlessly

from face to face. Her heart, with a hot, mad bound, told her it was for her he was searching through that glittering throng. He wore the imperial purple, and a jewelled crown rested above his brow. "My king," she murmured aloud. Dr. Brandenburg leaned forward with a quick movement to see of whom she spoke, but half a dozen stood with the diadem of royalty above their brows. How could he guess? Poor, miserable dupe to his own emotions, he thought that tender murmur was for him! A glad flash illumined his face as though an angel had kissed it.

"Heaven bless my darling," he whispered, with a tenderness indescribable. It sent a pang of reproach to Electra's heart. Just then, as if there were a power in her gaze, a magnetism impossible to resist, Lynn Evesham stood before them, having made his way with quick steps through the gay crowd, and reached her before she seemed aware of his intention to join her.

"Well, I have found you out at last; you completely mystified me! Here I have been making love to another fair domino all the evening—in whispers—thinking she was you!"

He said this laughingly, lightly, but Electra detected a deeper current of feeling under the badinage, and a red spot gleamed out on his cheek.

"Had we not better think of going home?" he added, glancing at his watch; "it is half-past four now, and it will be broad daylight before we reach Beechmoor."

"So much the better," replied Dr. Brandenburg, who did not at all relish the idea of Evesham's ride

home. "We will have to remain to bid adieu to our guests."

"Well, thank heaven, they are making their *congé* to Mrs. Moore fast enough, and we will soon be released. The closing scene of a ball is always so terribly wearisome to me!"

The Doctor looked as resolute and grim as Geryon; but Electra said, pleasantly: "I cannot understand why it should be so, Mr. Evesham. It is always delightful to know that we have been able to confer enjoyment upon others, and to have them assure us of it."

"Oh! you great, little unsophisticated! Why are you hidden away in this oriel? Are you a follower after that old snarleyow—St. Paul—who says women should not speak in public places?"

This last speaker was Fanny Moore, who, with her usual *brusquerie*, paused before the trio. "Of what are you talking, pray?" she added, saucily.

"Mr. Evesham advocates a veto against the custom of *congé*-ing, if one may coin such a word," said Electra.

"I agree with him. At the close of such an entertainment as this, everybody is weary; and ladies especially so! Our dresses are torn and crumpled, our flowers withered, our blushes faded, our eyes heavy, our hair out of curl, our triumphs shrunk—to what?—a little dominion over a man's heart! and realizing that 'there's nothing true but Heaven,' our great desire is to get home before daylight comes to show our wrinkles; and to that bourne we call 'home,' I propose

that we hie. I am very much fatigued, and any one can see from Electra's pale face that she is 'done to death.' Let us go!"

Dr. Brandenburg turned to look at Electra. She was pallid, and evidently weary; but so patient, she looked saint-like.

"Just as you say," he sighed; and they escorted the ladies to the "cloak-room." Mrs. Moore was soon found in readiness for departure, and the masquerade, with its pæans for triumphs, and requiems for disappointments, had drunk their last echo.

Lynn Evesham placed Electra as comfortably under the "robe" as Brandenburg had done before him, and he took the seat beside her.

"Oh! Electra," he whispered, "I have so longed for the dull *masque* to be over, that I might thus possess you—all alone to myself." He gently pressed her hand, nor did she essay to release it for a moment or two; then with a light laugh—a lightness that betrayed rather than hid the emotion of her throbbing heart—she asked:

"Are we to stand sentinels here until all the sleighs pass us? The parlors would be better if that is the *rôle*."

Quickly his hands grasped the reins, and away they sped over the sparkling crusted snow, lightly as a swallow skims the surface of a placid lake.

Dr. Brandenburg assisted his aunt and cousin into their sleigh, and with a little sigh took his place beside them. He could hardly tell why he sighed. He had

avowed his love to Electra, had held her hand in his own while he did so. She had murmured "My king!" and blushed when he blessed her. But, for all this, a sudden pang at his heart—a wailing—that he might neither soothe nor stifle, told him all was not well with him.

Mrs. Moore sat silent—indisposed to converse—thinking only of the words Lynn Evesham had whispered to her, under the supposition that she was "Electra;" and Fanny, after a petulant exclamation of "bores," nestled down in a comfortable corner, and relieved her triumphs in her dreams.

When they arrived at Beechmoor,

"The dim, red morn had died, her journey done,
And with dead lips smiled at the twilight plain,
Half fallen across the threshold of the sun,
Never to rise again."



CHAPTER X.

DAYS and weeks had passed since the gay masquerade in L——, when Dr. Brandenburg had revealed the deep passion in his heart to Miss Rutherford, and still Lynn Evesham lingered at Beechmoor, feeling the tenderest and purest emotions of his soul swayed by even the presence of the fair orphan; still, Mrs. Moore manoeuvred and wove her web of worldly calculations with the same unerring persistency as if she had been one of the mystic Moirai—the inexorable Three, bent upon the destruction of human life and human happiness; still, Fanny—careless, childish, light-hearted Fanny—coquetted and flirted, and pleased without feeling her heart quicken its pulses. Electra, too, was still of the household—that household in which she had had to struggle with the heart, as only such women as she can be made to do. Battle as she did, and meant to do, against it, she found that Lynn Evesham had wrung into her heart that he was to her what Dr. Brandenburg would have given all to be—that he was loved with an intensity, the knowledge of which even startled herself. But had she yielded the pearl of its confession to his keeping? No! and thus far, she was yet the conqueror. He had pressed his love with the same ardor of his rival, on the return from the brilliant “revel of the masks,” only to

have the same knell sounded over his hopes. And so she lived on as she had done from the days of her early childhood, girdled with a sensation of loneliness; feeling that her young heart and her strong brain were capable of so much, but that the dark cloud which shut her from the adulation of a world ever too censorious, also sealed away in the Egyptian darkness the flashing fountain of eternal youth, beauty, and love; and alas! there was for her no light-footed, sweet-breathed Ariadne to place a thread in her trembling fingers to guide her from the charnel-house of her hopes, where despair sat, fiend-like, gibbering through the gloom. Trampling the emotions of her heart, that prompted a reciprocation of Lynn Evesham's passion, in the dust, her inexorable pride demanded that she should tear herself from those scenes which daily, hourly, tested the supremacy of her heart over the dictates of her own conscience; and she felt that she must either suffer these barriers to be razed to the earth by the pitiless storm of his passion, or she must leave Beechmoor, freeing herself from the silken nets and gilded links of Love's chains, commence her life anew, and dedicate it again to her sainted mother, for the vindication of whose honor she had sworn so solemn an oath in the compact she had made with her God the night of her flight from the Grange. She had just read an advertisement for a governess, by a Mr. Aubin McDowell, of Georgia, and she had resolved to apply for the situation. She sat alone in her pleasant room, before her writing-desk, when the door was suddenly and unceremoni-

ously opened, and Fanny Moore tripped in, and with a supercilious simper, said, as she shut the door after her :

"Electra, put away those papers ; I have something to tell you !"

Electra forced a smile to her anxious face, laid her letter back in her desk, and dropped her rounded chin in her little white hand, in an attentive attitude, asking :

"What is it, Fanny ? I am all attention."

"Well, I've come to tell you I am engaged to be married. This it is and nothing more !"

"To whom ?—your cousin ?"

Electra asked the question with a vague unrest at her heart, and the color receded from her face, leaving it strangely cold and pallid.

"My cousin, indeed ! No ! to Lynn Evesham."

"Lynn Evesham !"

The words fairly burst from Electra's quivering lips.

"Why, Electra, what is the matter ? You look ill !"

"No, nothing but a sudden pain : it is gone now."

"Well, I mean what I say ; Lynn Evesham and I are to be married one month from to-day, and we shall sail direct to England. The health of his uncle is visibly declining, and he must hasten home, so that he can take possession of the estate immediately upon the death of the present incumbent—a death which may occur at any time."

Fanny talked rapidly, with a strange flush upon her brow, and a shimmering, uneasy light in her clear,

intense blue eyes, but Electra was too much occupied with the bitterness of her own emotions to notice those which swayed Fanny ; and even if she had observed them, it would have been with the thought that love had wrought the change.

"Mamma is half wild at the thought of me marrying a real, blue-blooded Englishman ! And then just think of my *trousseau* ! How charming it will be to have so many new things !—(What a pity that one is seldom married more than once in a lifetime !) I am frantic at the thought of it all, myself ! The laces and velvets, and satins and jewels ! I shall be married in white satin, and *point de Venice* overdress, and waxen orange-blossoms scented with orange perfume—the real flowers wither so, you know—and Lynn says he will give me a full set of diamonds. I wonder if they will be becoming !"

Electra raised her eyes to the eager, girlish face, flushed and triumphant, and she thought : "Why should I dislike her, that she has won the heart I love ? I might have known Lynn Evesham was trifling—indeed, I have told him I knew it ! He had both of us to choose from ; or, at least, he thought he had, and he took Fanny. He was right. I have nothing to do with love. I have nothing to do with anything that has joy, peace, happiness, or rest in it. Mine is a higher duty than dressing gayly, wearing diamonds, or gladdening the heart of a man of unstable principles, and an imperfect sense of what is due to an unfortunate, unprotected, and orphan girl. Yes, I will—I *do* wish

that Fanny may be happy!—I will still struggle on to the goal of my life—to banish the calumny which taints the name of my holy mother, happy if I at last succeed; and remembering always, and under every circumstance, that I have nothing in common with the world—that I must never accept the individual love of a heart—must never even dream that human happiness, or the paradise of home can be mine. I must not ‘live down’ nor smother the blight which rests upon me—I must stand with my mother’s honor clasped, like a white dove of peace, to my heart—and *I will!*”

Actuated by the emotions which so strengthened and exalted her, Electra rose, and folding her arms about Fanny, pressed her lips upon her forehead, and murmured:

“Ah! how beautiful it seems to love and be loved. It fills all the heart with joy, and makes every thought like a dream of heaven! Does it not, sweet one? April twenty-fifth! that will be your coronation-day, when the crown of love will be laid upon your brow, and the bridal buds be not sweeter than your thoughts. Marriage is the golden mile-stone of life, where woman gathers hopes to blossom; and God grant they may never wither on your heart, Fanny!”

Again she pressed her lips to the childish face looking up into her own, with rosy mouth breaking into dimpling smiles, and wondering blue eyes, that seemed to ask why she talked so earnestly about that which, to her, was only a petty triumph, and nothing to feel deeply over at all. And soon the expression found voice, for she exclaimed:

“I am so glad that you sympathize with me in my joy, Electra; but it amuses me to hear you talk so seriously—so passionately, with that deep light in your eyes, about a thing which is only the fulfilment of the destiny of every woman, as much as it is natural for us to love sleep.”

“But, Fanny, such a destiny! And believe me, my dear friend, *marriage* is *not* the fulfilment! It is the *after-life*; it is the earnest, faithful tenderness with which you bless and brighten and purify the heart whose salvation will henceforth be yours; it is the sacred performance of every duty—the entire, unselfish merging of your life into the life of another—the recognizing of no separate existence; it is the peace you find *within* which gives happiness; and happiness, in the eyes of God, is only the *fulfilment* of marriage.”

“Oh, pshaw, Electra!”—Fanny pouted her pretty lips. “You are preaching a sermon. To me marriage is the ‘Open Sesame’ to a world of wonders, of wealth, of beauties, distinctions, and admiration. If Lynn Evesham anticipates aught else from a union with me, he will be disappointed—that’s all of it! Think you this golden-crowned head of mine was not made to flash in aristocratic *salons*, and these restless, little feet to tread the mazes of the maddest, merriest waltzes? I *know* they were, and they shall too! I would not marry the best man that ever lived to carry his keys—not I! Much less would I marry Lynn Evesham—who has a will of his own!”

Fanny emphasized her unwomanly, unnatural morals

with an impatient stamp of her little slipper upon the carpet, and turned to leave the room, saying, as she did so—

"I have not been with you ten minutes, but I will wager you my watch against your solitaire that Mamma is impatient as if I had been gone an hour : *au revoir*."

The foolish bird that flutters in the fowler's cruel net, the flower that unfurls its spotless, perfumed petals on the morning of storms, the guileless child gathering flowers on the brink of an awful abyss—none—none of these can be more melancholy objects of consideration and sympathy than a beautiful, engaging woman, who draws from the fountains of vanity and passion her only sources of hope and happiness! Yet who, of all who daily witness this sad indifference to the nobler impulses and principles of a good, pure life, speaks of her danger? Do those who stand aloof in unassailable security—those who have never known how insatiable is the thirst of vanity, nor how ensnaring is earthly love? Even if, suddenly pausing in her headlong course, she herself awakens to a sense of her situation, fraught with so much sorrow—who is near to aid her in fostering this impulse of self-preservation? Who puts out a hand to rescue her? She looks to her sister woman, and envy and malevolence urge her onward and accelerate her fall. She leans on man, and he, less cruel but more basely treacherous, covers her with the garment of praise and pours upon her head the chrism of joy, and over it puts the crown of thorns, crying, "Peace, peace, where there is no peace." It was

thus that the priests of old led forth their unconscious victims, amid merriment and dance and song, and wreathed in radiant flowers—to bleed and die upon the Altar of Sacrifice! And verily this hour of sorrow was lying in wait for Fanny Moore adown the rosy vistas of the future! Who cares to know that the lion and the leopard love to crouch in the fairest and most flowery jungles? Who thinks to dream that the pure, spotless lily, ever nodding to its image in the stream, may be "tied to a beautiful death below?" or that the azure violet, modest and sweet, may veil the baleful eye and poisonous fang of the serpent beneath its glossiest leaves? Who pauses, in contemplating an orange sunset flecked with crimson, to think of the rain which may fall to-morrow? Not many; and Fanny was no exception to the general rule of worshippers at the shrine of Mammon, for *Custom*, like a modern Medea, presented the "altar-cloth" on which the sacrifice was made.

Electra was again alone after Fanny retired, and a prey to her own dark thoughts. Lynn Evesham marry another? It was a thought which had never occurred to her before. Although she had repulsed his attentions; although, on the night of that ride home from the ball masquerade, she had solemnly assured him that she would never marry, and that his avowed love was painful, ay, more, insulting to her, she had never entertained the idea that he would marry any one, at least until he found that the attainment of her life's dream was idle. Perhaps he believed that the discovery would

only lead to additional mortification. He was trifling with her—yes, only trifling; and however much her grandmother had neglected her in other respects, she had instilled into her a bitter hatred and scorn for all who trifle with human affections. In this hollow world, with its thousand snares, its alluring vices, its falsehood and treachery, in many things she thought she might go sadly astray; but she could never learn to teach her heart to lie—to tamper with the sacred feelings of the inner life. Surely Lynn Evesham could have been more open and less cruel in his desire to close their acquaintance. If she had been at liberty to accept his attentions—his love—she thought that there would have been nothing which she would not have done to prove her affection! She could have sacrificed herself to a life of toil uncomplainingly for his good; she could have forgiven cruel words and taunts—for these were things she knew all women had at some time to endure; but never, never, was her heart intended for a plaything—to amuse an idle hour! Her blood burned fiercely at the thought of his kisses, and his passionate avowal that she was his—*his*—and that she dared not own allegiance to another. Fanny had awakened her from a lethargy as sweet as the dream of a lotus-eater. She knew that she had no right to expect him to wait one—five—ten—or twenty years, and even then, perhaps, be unsuccessful in his suit; for she was too proud to marry a man to whom she was unequal in point of lineage. It was a beautiful, bright, flashing meteor, lighting the sky of her life, and then

dying out at once and forever. She would forget him, or remember him only as one whom her imagination had idealized into a hero, but who was found, upon trial, to be unstable—wholly unworthy of the high position to which her enthusiasm had elevated him. She opened her desk again, took out her letter to Mr. McDowell, re-read it, and then catching up her pen, with rapid, concise strokes terminated the application. She felt confident of acceptance—she could hardly tell why; and ah! how she thanked God that she was going away to other scenes, to other faces, to duty—stern, implacable duty—which would force her to think of others, and bury her own emotional life down—down—down—so that its mad yearning for “the far-off, unattainable and dim,” would never tempt her again from the goal of her hopes.

And Lynn Evesham? Was he to blame for this sudden freak of his? Assuredly yes, but it was a very natural temptation to bind himself, in a moment of blind passion, to a woman who flattered his vanity with ten thousand voiceless assurances of admiration and love, when he believed the woman who was real mistress of his affections to be, not only untrue to him, but bound to another, and that other his bosom-friend.

Mrs. Moore had played her cards with amazing success. That very morning she had *confided* to Lynn Evesham, Electra’s “secret engagement” with Dr. Brandenburg, which was to be consummated in June, and had bound him over in silence, adding, by way of

a *quietus*, "It might offend Tom, you know, he is so odd about such things."

"Do not fear, Madam, I shall not intrude my congratulations," he had answered, haughtily, while he silently cursed the star of his evil destiny.

And all the time that Mrs. Moore was stabbing the man's heart, Fanny was affecting the graces to the best advantage; and throwing herself in his way while resentment and anger toward Electra were consuming him with their white heat, she had, according to expectation, received his addresses. Woman was never wooed, never won, in terser mood or terser terms. He had said, taking her hand in a listless way: "Fanny, be my wife;" and she, without affectation, had replied: "I will, Lynn," and Mrs. Moore had awarded her smiling sanction. In all this, with them there had been no thought of future joy or sorrow. Wealth, intellect, beauty, and distinction—all had been obtained. Rare combination of irresistible attractions! Indeed would Mrs. Moore have been foolish, with maternal tenderness to whisper in those small, rosy ears: "Be true to your own heart." Mrs. Moore was hardly to blame for this; it was her education. She had married without "romance" herself, and her wedded life had proven comparatively happy. Mr. Moore had always kept her *porte-monnaie* well supplied; he never restricted her movements, and was always happy in his attendance upon her, and his gratification of her "whims." But Mr. Moore was a "model husband," and she could hardly expect Lynn Evesham, with his

hot blood and quick temper, to be another; and, besides, her husband always tenderly loved her, and Lynn Evesham had shown by unmistakable signs, when Electra's *pseudo* engagement was confided to him, that he was wounded—bitterly indignant. But, what matter? He had leapt the awful chasm now! And however he may have been allured by the breath of flowers—however he may have been pressed forward by the forbidding aspect around him—the cold winds of fate—the glaring lightnings of passion—he knew afar off for him, beyond the Ithaca looming in the present, stretched the sunny valleys of delight. But what availed the knowledge? He could not recede. And, to confess honestly, he hardly knew whether he desired to do so or not. The loves and hatreds of humanity are replete with strange and startling contrarieties. And Lynn's were especially so; for while he worshipped Electra with all the purest emotions of which he was capable—while he felt that life, separated from her, would be but a dread, arid Sahara—he hugged the phantom of a false passion to his heart, and looking in the blue depths of Fanny's eyes, he swore he would forget her; and even as he tasted the rosy wine of love on Fanny's glowing lips, he silently cursed its Marah-taste, and remembered, with maddening rapture, a beautiful, quivering mouth he had kissed one day in the past—that past which contained for him all that was delicious in life and sweet to memory. Ah,

"Time rules us all. And life indeed is not
The thing we planned it out, ere hope was dead."

While Electra sat in her quiet room, grieved that the idol of her dreams lay shattered before her in thousands of fragments, yet grateful that, freed from the toils of a passion to which she had well-nigh succumbed, her feet were once more shodden for the journey onward ; and that, unlike the lay of the romance, Mentor was caught, and lingered to strengthen her when she wearied by the wayside, and the cool rock offered its shadow from the glaring sun of despair. And, too, while she sat there, busied with her own thoughts, the sounds of gay voices and laughter arrested her attention. Stepping quickly to the window, she looked out. Fanny Moore and Lynn Evesham had just mounted two superb horses, for a ride over the hills. As they passed the window, Fanny looked up with a merry smile, and Lynn flashed his great black eyes at her with a questioning intensity that sent the blood back to her heart with a painful shock. She saw how pale he was—how unlike himself he was already growing. But she only smiled coldly, curling her proud lip as she did so with a cutting scorn, and Lynn Evesham assumed a defiant air as he beheld it, and struck his spurs deep into the flanks of the spirited animal he rode, hurling his distance fully a length ahead of his fair companion. Electra gazed after them a moment, and then, turning to the mirror, she grasped a toilet-brush, and while she slowly smoothed the hair rippling away from her dark, bright face, she said :

"That man thinks I am a toy to be trifled with at will ! But I will perfectly convince him that he deals

with a spirit higher and prouder than his own. I will show him, that, shamed and disgraced as I am in the eyes of the world—denied a name—denied a willing shelter amid those who should have protected me tenderly—cherished by a stranger's bounty—I can and do scorn him, his wealth, his passion, and above all, his heartlessness toward a lone, sorrowing woman !"

Then, her heart suddenly asserting itself, her face went down in her hands, and she whispered :

"Be still, be strong, be brave. Oh ! coward heart ! Gird thyself up ! Thou hast no right to throb—no right to love. I have anointed thee with the chrism of faith, and laid thee as a holy sacrifice upon the Altar of Filial Affection !"

When she turned, a moment later, to descend from her chamber, the glow which had fevered her cheeks with its scorching heat at her passionate words, had died out, and an icy pallor had settled on the calm, impenetrable beauty of her face.

... "There are fatal days, indeed,
In which the fibrous years have taken root
So deeply that they quiver to their tops,
Whene'er you stir the dust of such a day."



CHAPTER XI.

NIGHT was mantling the earth when Electra Rutherford stood before Dr. Brandenburg's study and rapped lightly on the door.

"Come in," answered a voice from within, and trembling, but with firm outward show, she entered.

A flash of pleased surprise brightened Dr. Brandenburg's face, as he raised his eyes and discovered the intruder. A moment more and he had risen, taken Electra's hand, and led her to the easiest chair in the room.

"This is an unexpected pleasure, Electra," he said, tenderly; "you have so persistently absented yourself for the past month, that I entertained the thought with serious anxiety, that the light of your sweet presence would never bring sunshine into this retreat again."

Electra smiled faintly: "My dear friend, if I only gave credence to one-half the kind things you say, I would become intolerably vain; but I have too humble an estimate of myself to be led to interpret your remarks otherwise than as the natural promptings of a Christian man when addressing even so simple a representative of my sex. You were wrong, however, in your supposition that I would abandon this pleasant

study with any feeling save that of regret, for I have passed more really delightful and profitable hours just here, than anywhere else at Beechmoor."

Electra talked on so smoothly and unexcitedly that she was absolutely surprised at herself. Poor child! She knew that she had acquired this self-possession only at the cost of her heart's most holy and beautiful emotions; and now that she was transformed into one of those dangerous *filles de marbre*, she skimmed, lightly as a swallow on the wing, over the sea of her affections, frozen above, but turgid beneath as the impenetrable depths of the dark Morimarusa, which never yields up the treasures consigned to its waves. She thought she had found a Lethe—that for her broken dream the winds of the past would wail no touching "*miserere*." Alas! even then, a hidden grave was in her heart—"in memoriam" graven upon the pallid stone that marked its resting-place. Dr. Brandenburg sat looking at her with a yearning tenderness, wondering where the difference lay, for he felt a nameless change. But she did not long remain silent.

"Doctor," she said, "I have come to you to-night to confide to you my thoughts and plans for the future." Here she looked in the fire to avoid the intense gaze of the dark eyes fastened upon her.

"What is it, Electra? Faithful and devoted as you found me in the past, will you find me to-night, ever willing to encourage, assist, and admire."

He spoke gently, though his address was marked by a certain embarrassed hesitation, which had influenced

his bearing toward her since the day their little party had returned from L——, when she had roused him from love's young dream with the assurance that she could not accept his affection, since she never intended to marry.

"Well, my kind, generous friend, I almost hesitate to tell you, confident that I will meet with your opposition; and desirous as I am for your approval upon every action of my life, I scarcely know how to express to you this most important decision. I am going away from dear Beechmoor. Stay—do not speak now. I have determined to go to Georgia—to become, in short, a governess. I believe that thereby my best interests will be promoted and conserved. I am grateful—God alone knows how earnestly—for all your kindness to me. But I am able—I must—and, moreover, I would prefer—to be independent. To promote this end, and also, as far as I can, repay my indebtedness to you, shall be my first object: then, my father."

Dr. Brandenburg passionately interrupted her.

"Am I not doing all that I can? Am I not instituting every search possible?"

Electra laid her hand gently on his arm:

"You are, my kind friend; but I feel that the duty is eminently mine—not yours."

"This is folly, my dear girl—extreme folly. You know nothing of the world, nor of its ways. One of the world's thinkers used to say, 'Every man's duty is that which lies nearest his hand,' and yours lies not in Georgia, but here, to wait patiently for that success or

failure with which my exertions must soon be rewarded."

"Not so, my friend. I can see my path of duty gleaming afar off, and I feel that it is my destiny to pursue it, to whatever goal it may lead. Every man's degree of fortune—be it high or low—has its own plane, and to that plane he must sink or rise, and to it rigidly accommodate himself. Man is plastic; circumstances are not, however egotistically we may assert to the contrary. I must conform to them, for they will not conform to me. When we say that 'contentment is the nucleus of happiness,' we merely assert the principle in a general way. 'Abstain and endure,' was the pithy formula by which Epictetus expressed the great law of life best calculated to insure happiness; and I must therefore deny myself the tempting fruit of luxury and ease that you so alluringly extend toward me. The plane to which I must accommodate myself, has for its fundamental law of existence thereon, the practice of labor and rigid economy. The moment that I permit myself to indulge in luxuries, that moment I infringe the law and render myself obnoxious to the penalty. And, my dear friend, the luxury of living longer at Beechmoor I must deny myself. Remunerative and legitimate employment is here ready to my hand. I would be unjust to myself to waver, even for a moment. Great results are never to be attained without physical and mental sacrifices. I must not falter.

"That is no deed for a woman true!
Hush your heart, and you still must know it."

I shall go to Georgia. Should better opportunities present themselves hereafter, doubtless I can, by some other arrangement, obtain a release from my engagement. And the saddest thought of all to me is, that once separated, probably we may never meet again this side of the grave." She paused, then continued: "For, although all things be within the range of human possibility, life is so uncertain, and its mutations are so equally doubtful, that it is scarcely wise or useful to base any present calculations upon future developments of that possibility. However this may be, I trust that you will never have cause to regret your generosity toward me."

"Electra!" Dr. Brandenburg ceased his perambulations and paused in front of her, "you reason and talk with the cold formality of a gray-headed *savan*, but you are wrong in your desire to leave Beechmoor. I honor you for your brave assumption of an almost discouraging duty, and so deep is the interest that I take in the question of its success, that I am all the more assiduous in presenting what I consider to be the first and most salient stepping-stone. Without a rigid adherence to, and dependence thereon, your success, at the best, may be only partial. Do not precipitate yourself into woes which cannot be discovered by anticipation. Remain here. It may chafe your restive spirit, but do your best to endure it, in all self-abnegation and self-sacrifice, being

"Sustained and soothed
By an unflinching trust"

in God. No man has a profounder appreciation than I, of the 'untold dangers' that must environ the path of a young girl who is forced to leave the charmed circle of home and face the world, its temptations and defilements; no man has a tenderer pity for such as must fight that weary, disheartening battle! It would kill me to see you one of these! Do I not meet them whenever I absent myself from Beechmoor? Have I not studied their hopeless faces, 'ruted deep with the ruts of misery,' until I could sit down and cry over them as though they were my own sisters—until I could starve for them, if that would do them any good? But beyond all this, I know that God fits the back to the burden, and that when He appoints a path of duty, He bestows the strength to walk rightly therein, provided that the heart be pure and trusting. And, Electra, you will listen to me—you will remain at Beechmoor?"

"No, my kind, dear friend, I cannot; I *must* be independent. Your own sense of delicacy and propriety will tell you I ought to go—ought to have gone a month ago. I hope you have faith enough in me to believe in my ability and determination to be a true and conscientious girl in the face of the world and its dangers, as well as within the home-circle. I do not believe that my theories of life and its duties are either false or unwholesome. I do not think that mere epitomes of demoralization can find a blind follower in me."

"Electra, listen to me! I want to serve you. Oh! it is such a sweet—such a priceless boon!" He caught her hands, pressed them close to his breast, and gazing

down upon her, continued in a trembling voice:
 "Life, for me, holds this single pleasure—serving you.
 Would you deny it to me?"

"Indeed, indeed I am grateful for your unvarying kindness—"

"Grateful! My God, Electra, I am sick of the word '*gratitude*!' I want your *love*! You must not—shall not leave me!"

Electra withdrew her hands from his grasp, and lightly clasping them over his arm, turned to keep pace with his resumed steps. She bent her head, and, while her face flushed hotly, murmured:

"Alas! my dear friend, spare me! Your reproaches cut me to the heart. I only grieve that you love me, because I am so wholly unworthy. Your heart is so grand, so pure, so noble! In the generous impulse of your nature you think it unnecessary for me to go away; but a moment's clear unbiased thought will convince you that I am right."

"Right? Never, never, *never*! Electra, you are so guileless, so unsuspicious, so ignorant of the world, its trials, its temptations! Abandon this idea! Do not cast yourself into such an abyss of destruction, in defiance of the loving arms outstretched to fold you tenderly to a true and manly heart. Oh! darling, listen to me! Electra, be my wife! I will shelter you from all storms—shield you—love you! I will make your whole life one triumph of unclouded joy. I will gratify you in all things, at any cost of pain to myself. Your sweet face, the sweetest face I have ever looked upon,

inspires this, setting aside those intellectual qualities and moral and social excellences which so fit you to add grace to a throne! Oh! Electra, be my wife! If you could only know all my life! And how I have wished to harden my heart against love toward anybody; not that I was insensible to tenderness, but because I believed the fewer loves one had, the fewer heartaches would follow. True it is that I wished to do this, and that I thought I had done it; but I had not seen *your* face, nor had I been brought under the wonderful fascination of your influence. I had never lived for a moment in an atmosphere filled with such glorious light and delicious fragrance as that which you have diffused all about me. Glad am I now, that I failed to make my heart a thing of stone. Oh! darling, since I first beheld you, I have loved you—worshipped you! Electra! you will not—you cannot resist my appeal! Electra—be my wife!"

"Oh, do not speak in that wild way, Dr. Brandenburg! It pains me so! My friend, my dear, kind, generous friend, I wish I could love you as you desire! God knows I do! But oh, I cannot—I cannot! If I could control my poor, miserable heart, it should be yours—all yours; but I am powerless. It is an independent sovereignty, and I am its slave; I cannot teach it emotion!"

Electra was terribly in earnest. Brandenburg could not mistake this by the startled anxious light in her eyes, the quivering loveliness of her red lips, and the passionate pleading expressed in her voice and her

gesture, as with clasped hands she stood looking up into his pale, agitated face.

"Electra, do you love another? Tell me this! I am ungenerous to question you thus—but—do you love Lynn Evesham?" The doctor fairly jerked the words from his throbbing heart, and Electra sprang at the sound of that name as if stung, and pressing her hands tightly to her temples, she exclaimed, with unnecessary heat, and unnatural passion:

"Love another? and that other—Lynn Evesham? No! believe me! for I say it with solemn earnestness, I am free, wholly—solely free; and if I had you and him to choose from now, I would fervently, gladly lay my hands in yours, and give my heart to you!"

"God bless you for these words, Electra! Then, at least I may hope—"

"No, no, no! you must not! My determination is inexorable. I shall never, never marry! I have one object in life—it is useless to repeat it here; only God's hand can arrest my progress toward its fulfilment," she answered, solemnly.

Just then the servant entered, and lit the chandelier. As he did so, the flashing light fell over the tall form of Lynn Evesham, who had entered from the folding-doors that separated the library from the parlor, and hearing the comment upon himself and his host, was about to retire when the servant lighting the lamps discovered his presence. He turned to go, with a stern, angry gleam in his eye, but Electra, with a light laugh, and an unmistakable sneer upon her proud lips, advanced toward him, saying:

"Allow me to offer my congratulations upon your superior good fortune in securing so fair a bride!"

Sweeping him a low courtesy, which had everything of a mocking sarcasm in its grace, she passed him, but he had his heel ground down upon the carpet, as if crushing an envenomed reptile, and it had caught the sweeping trail of her dress, and she was forced to pause. An instant, and she was gone.

That was perhaps the maddest, merriest evening Electra ever passed in her life. Her witticisms bubbled and sparkled like the frost-work froth of *Cliquot*; and while neither Lynn Evesham nor Dr. Brandenburg could sympathize with or understand this emotional gayety—while both their hearts were sad with the shadows of coming events—while they were both disposed to pronounce her "perfectly heartless"—they could but admire her vivacity and grace, render homage to her beauty, and love her madly, and with all the terrible strength of their hearts. Fanny and her mother, though pleasant and attractive, paled before the light of Electra Rutherford's presence, as the 'half-spent lamps' of heaven, at early dawn compare with the calm, glorious beauty of the vestal star, in the rosy and golden Orient. But, ah! when she sat alone in her own room, when the long gray vistas of the future stretched unpitifully before her; when she raised up her mourning voice to

"Cry to the winds—O God! it might have been!"

when the delightful past leaned alluringly to her from the rose-crowned hours of a life she had abandoned;

when the tears she might not smother, flowed over the flushing of her cheek, *then* was the time to judge of her heartlessness!

"Mourn, O Muse—not indeed for the wrongs life hath felt—
These have mourners enough in the world; mourn, and melt
Into tears else unshed, for the wrongs life hath wrought,
By the transient desire, and the trivial thought,
For the man (be he lover or loved) that doth jest
With the passionate earnest of love in the breast
Of a woman; for the woman (or maiden or wife)
That doth jest with the passionate earnest of life,
In the heart of a man!"



CHAPTER XII.

A FEW days of expectation passed, and Electra was accepted as Aubin McDowell's governess; and in that short lapse of time a sad change had passed over Beechmoor. Lynn Evesham, anathematizing his fate, had turned his back upon the one spot of all the wide world where he had been happiest—the one spot that contained all of love and memory for him. Ah!

—"To what gulfs
A single deviation from the track
Of human duties leads even those who claim
The homage of mankind as their born due,
And find it till they forfeit it themselves!"

When Lynn Evesham looked on Miss Rutherford, he felt the force of this passionate wail of regret over the wasted life that could know no resurrection, for he knew that he was inevitably bound to another, and separated from her. Ay! and *there* lay the sting—bound to another! And was she not the same? He believed so, but the thought did not assuage his pain. If he could have found the slightest indication of weakness in Electra, in defiance of everything he would have released himself from his engagement to Fanny. Ah! how he regretted the passionate impulse of one

mad moment! Think of it! shaping the destinies of three lives! And in it all scarcely half-a-dozen words had been spoken.

At last the morning of departure dawned. Lynn Evesham, Mrs. Moore, and Fanny, equipped for travelling, stood with Dr. Brandenburg in the vestibule, waiting for the carriage to roll around to the door. Electra stood apart, out in the sunshine, the golden and warm light forming a radiant aureola around her head, such as we see surrounding those beautiful saints, and *Matres dolorosæ* and Madonnas, which the old painters used so to love. Her large sweet eyes were serene and clear as the April sky; only her mouth seemed to denote something—I scarce know how to describe it. Lynn Evesham stepped nearer to her. No: nothing, positively—only the old expression—it was always sad. In vain the young Englishman looked for some sign of regret in her face. There was none. Had it been kissed by the Virgin, it could not have been more cloudless; if she had been an ivory Dian, she could not have seemed, to all appearances, more white and cold.

“And you are really going away from Beechmoor?” She turned full around and looked into his face. Had not that Sphinx-like expression so baffled him, he would have put the query—“Shall I stay?” But he was silent. She continued with graceful but chilling indifference: “Of course you will often let Dr. Brandenburg hear from you; and you will keep us posted as regards the *affaires des cœurs*, until the 25th has

passed.” Then, as her eyes looked dreamily away into the distance: “How strange are the mutations of life! Fanny and I, for example; she goes hence into a world of perpetual delights, and I—to work. But I cannot regret my destiny. I like society, but its shallow enjoyments do not satisfy me. I must have a purpose in life, else I grow misanthropic and cynical.”

Her voice grew husky as she turned her face toward the approaching carriage. Lynn had no time to ask any questions, for Fanny had advanced and thrown her arms around Electra's neck, and was bidding her farewell. He noticed the manner in which the orphan received the caress, and often afterward recalled the simile which then suggested itself to his mind—a queen lily bending to give a gay-winged butterfly a sip of the honey in her heart.

“Oh, Electra,” said Fanny, with unfeigned sorrow in her usually gay voice, “I am so grieved to leave you! When I came here I did not expect to like you, but I do; I just love you dearly,”—with a close embrace—“and you must come to me at L——, a week before everybody else! Now, promise me!”

Electra's reply was modulated and sweet, but Lynn Evesham failed to detect any heart in the clear tones: “I, too, am sorry we are to part, Fanny; but no matter where you may go, no matter how many changes the future may effect, I shall never forget you—never cease to be grateful for your friendship and affection. The saddest thought which obtrudes itself, is, that once parted we may never meet again. But I earnestly, fer-

vently wish that you may always be happy—good-bye."

"No, Electra, you must not talk so! I will not think of this separation so sadly; I will trust to that destiny which fixes all things in life, and will hope we may yet pass many happy hours together. Promise me to come to L—. You will if you love me!"

Electra shook her head quietly, but positively: "No, dear Fanny, I cannot! If you gauge my affection thus, you will be disappointed and do me injustice."

"No, I shall not; and I will not believe you care so little for me as to disappoint me. Good-bye."

One light kiss, and they had separated never to meet again. Lynn Evesham, pale and trembling strangely, advanced, and taking her cold little hand in his own, looked down on her with a dumb, yearning intensity of passionate love; and she—she would have been more than human could she have repressed the painful flush that glowed in her cheeks. "Good-bye, Electra," he said, his voice trembling with his emotion; "and oh!—if you—God bless you!" He wrung her hand, betraying by his very grasp the strength of his self-control.

"Good-bye, Mr. Evesham," Electra said, simply, "I wish you every happiness," and she withdrew her fingers from his feverish palm.

The man turned away sick with the weight of his great sorrow. Yet, even in that moment of darkness, he had a generous thought for her. "Thank God she at least is spared this pain!" He stepped into the

carriage and sank back amid the cushions, closing his eyes as if to shut out forever and forever the vision of the beautiful Psyche in the doorway, and Fanny hummed a gay French *chanson*, while her mother viewed the ruin she had wrought, and gloried in her triumph. And it was over—that parting. Electra drew a deep sigh of relief, it would be so much easier to forget, she thought, if the temptation were withdrawn that so forced her to remember.

It was a sad as well as a beautiful picture, that young girl, with her Guido face, standing out in the sunlight, watching the carriage as it receded in the distance. Dr. Brandenburg stood looking at her, and loving her too, as he had never, could never love any other living thing. It has been said that we do not realize the value of treasures until we have lost or are about to lose them. This thought occupied the hearts of both Electra and Dr. Brandenburg, but ah! the objects were so different.

"... And here the first part
Of this drama is over. The curtain falls furl'd
On the actors within it—the heart and the world.
Woo'd and wooer have played with the riddle of life—
Have they solved it?"



CHAPTER XIII.

THE warm glow of sunset had chased all shadows from the "Study," and in its radiance Dr. Brandenburg and Electra Rutherford sat talking of the latter's approaching departure. The Doctor sat in a large arm-chair, his head pressed back against the purple cushions, and his dark eyes dreamily resting on the young girl kneeling beside him, her soft hands folded over her heart, her face, that dark, bright face, shaded by a dreamy thought that clouded all her future. He had ceased to importune her to remain; ceased to assure her of his devotion, since the fact was too apparent that such assurances gave her only pain, without conferring gratification; and since he could not change her resolutions, he undertook the nobler part—that of encouraging her in the faithful performance of them. Verily, "greater is he that ruleth his own spirit, than he that taketh a city!" And so, the good doctor, striving hard to conceal this one great, pitiful sorrow of his life, under a cheerful exterior, commenced in this wise:

"An unspectacled and youthful Cornelia Blimber! Think of it! I imagine I see you teaching the 'young idea how to shoot,' and fulfilling all the conventional duties which attach to the science of Pedagogy. Dick-

ens has invested the profession with a sentiment of which I can never rid myself in this connection. So, should you at any time find me expatiating on the romance of a very practical and unromantic subject, you must impute such extraordinary conduct, not so much to any peculiarity of the *Me* (to employ a metaphysical abstraction) as to the *Him*. Dickens, and not myself, will be the transgressor against the practical truth."

Dr. Brandenburg pronounced these words with an amused smile twitching at the corners of his mouth, and the slightest possible sarcasm in the deep music of his voice. But there was enough to call a flush to Electra's pallid brow. She saw that he was constrained, that his humor was grim and forced. He had, as it were, mounted himself on stilts, that he might rise above her immediate observation. And so she said, with a little more emphasis than usual, as she rose and stood in an attitude of self-confident grace before him:

"You may jest, as you choose, Dr. Brandenburg, but I honestly tell you I shall love to hear you praise pedagogy; and when I have become fairly enthroned in my *academic dignity*, I will convey to you some idea of the school and my pupils, and of the exact nature of the duties incumbent upon me. I, too, have no little curiosity in such matters, and a story of school-life possesses for me nearly the charm of a fairy-tale. Not that I esteem children as fairies, by any means, nor teachers ogres or ogresses; but that there is a freshness, a uniqueness about school-pictures, so to speak, which

is a characteristic of that most delightful department of fiction. Or perhaps I might better express them as invested (for me) with a Germanic tone—a sort of simple *grotesquerie*, such as you find in the pages of Hoffman, Fouque, and Zshokke.”

“Very well said, Electra; I like to hear you defend your profession,” answered the Doctor, laughing pleasantly. “I suppose I should make a sorry pedagogue, indeed. For I lack patience, and the mechanical tact for drilling down to the unknown (in more senses than one) intellects of juvenility. You, too, will find the path a stony one” (here he put out his hand and clasped hers, as if he would shield her from all cares) “in some particulars, and flowery enough, I apprehend, in others. At all events, you will have the supreme satisfaction of knowing that the profession is one of the highest—even were it the dullest—in which woman can engage, a profession quite as purely intellectual as any. You deal with the immature minds, to be sure; but what mind has ever yet reached absolute maturity? For maturity means perfection, and intellectual perfection means—divinity. Your labor is a stage among stages, tending toward a terminus which, for man, can never exist. Mere tendencies they are, after all—mere rounds in an endless ladder—and the more advanced are higher only in pure comparison, and not in literal fact. Take the case of a philosopher. He informs the mind of man; you inform the mind of the child; neither one can raise the pupil to omniscience, which is the perfection. You lay the super-

structure; he builds the stories of the Babel which, after all, ends only in empty space, and not in the skies. The teacher is a co-worker with the philosopher—each is helpless in attaining the comparative result without the other.”

“Doctor, your words lead me into a train of thought I have strenuously striven to banish, but which constantly recurs.” Electra was again on her knees by the great arm-chair, looking up in his face.

“Speak out then, my child, and, as far as lies in my power, I will assist you.”

“Well, it is this. The term ‘school-mistress’ is not unfrequently coupled with a sentiment of reproach; what shall I do,” she asked, with arch merriment, plying the Doctor with the weapons of his own musty philosophy, “if this fungus of hideous growth should attach itself to me?”

The Doctor’s first impulse was to say, “Keep out of the way of it,” but he did not, he only answered: “Many well-to-do people do so look upon it, I will admit, and that too while they affect refined ideas; in doing so, they are merely instancing those which are vulgar and unworthy. The best way, is to hug the maxim of Epictetus to your heart, which you recommended to me not long since: ‘Abstain and endure.’”

“I do not see why this should be so,” said Electra, earnestly. “Industry is honorable—it is more—it is the fulfilment of a moral duty; God linked it with happiness. You know (the gods have placed labor and toil on the way leading to the Elysian fields.)” By this

the earth has been cultivated, art advanced, men civilized. What would the world come to, if we each turned our backs upon our life-labor? God gave each of us physical and mental strength; we are accountable to Him for the uses we make of these divine gifts! Surely we should not regard them as curses! I, for one, shall treat the sneers against my profession with contempt, silent as it is deep!"

"You are right, my dear Electra," the Doctor replied; "this 'sneer,' you must know, is only a development of that same sensual (for it is not an intellectual) theory, which affects to see only vulgarity in manual labor, only degradation in poverty and honest endeavor. Such a sneer, to be sure, is not worth confutation, except as far as any erroneous and silly proposition is worth confutation for the very truth's sake. So, a man who should insist that the moon is composed of Cheshire cheese, would deserve no reply save that which you would in mere pity bestow upon an idiot. For myself, I glory as much in the sentiment of labor as I do in its results. You cannot divorce the two, even if you would. I glory as much in the intangible art of the blacksmith, as I do in its tangible result—the plowshare. Is the efficient cause of a thing, the active energy which produces it, less than the thing itself? Is the sun less glorious than the sunbeam? or the electric principle less wonderful or awful than the thunderbolt? You cannot ennoble the creature above its Creator; you cannot ennoble the emanation above its source. Yet men affect to admire progressive knowl-

edge, and the discipline of the intellect, while sneering at the worker who imparts the one and guides the other. I pity the man who strives to degrade the artisans who mould barbarism into civilization, and the mere mammal into the man. Man, in the highest stage of development, is the sum of artificialities which these artisans have produced. Expunge from the list of these any one class, and he can no more attain that highest stage than a painting could be produced without the existence of colors. Drop the machinists, and he must labor like an animal. Drop the street-sweepers, and he cannot live in cities. Drop the mechanic, and he becomes a savage. Drop the teachers, and he sinks to a mammal—a beast! Remember this, my child—he who labors in any legitimate walk of labor, ennobles himself, because he is helping to ennoble mankind. You cannot civilize others without civilizing yourself. You cannot help others without helping yourself. Such is the beneficent law of nature which urges us ever to labor and sacrifice for our kind, assuring us that as we do unto others so shall it be done unto us. Whoso propagates the heresy (for heresy it is) that labor is degrading, propagates the doctrine that civilization is degrading; for civilization is the fruition of labor. I do not esteem it necessary to press this undeniable truth upon your attention, for I have too firm a faith in your good sense to admit any doubts of your perception of truths so general and perspicuous as these. And yet I know that you will pardon its iteration, more especially because you will, doubtless, have

to encounter this unworthy, nay, more, this unholy prejudice, to an extent greater or less—which time will determine.”

After he had finished speaking, he again rested his hand on the shapely head, and with the other raised her face so that he could read its varying expressions, and asked, softly :

“Does my little lady shrink from the task she has undertaken?”

She raised her radiant eyes to his face, and with a proud curl of her red lips, said :

“Onward—upward—such is the resolution, not the dream of my life! Over the rough places God’s hand will guide me. My strength increases in proportion to the obstacles imposed upon it!”

Dr. Brandenburg rose, pacing the length of that study with slow and thoughtful step; at last pausing in front of Electra, in a voice whose emotion he could not control, he spoke :

“Child, child, I am afraid of your enthusiasm. Let me revert abruptly to this subject, because I can detect its existence in every word you breathe, and because I believe it to be your worst friend rather than the best. Every life is a life of commonplaces, and enthusiasm cannot deal with these. It will fail you when you stand most sorely in need of a supporting quality. Throw it aside. With it will go much of that freshness which is so pleasing to others—much of that ‘sunny-heartedness,’ as it is called; but with it will also go the incubus of the unpractical. In such a loss there will be gain.”

Electra looked up and smiled brightly.

“This is excellent advice to bestow upon *man*, my friend, but woman is only capable of great actions when her enthusiasm is roused. I know my own heart, and I know, too, that the ‘sunny-heartedness’ which you condemn affords me an impenetrable armor for the future battles I will have to fight with the world! While time flows there is no rest for me—save in the grave. Nature never pauses! On—on—on—ages and ages have rolled away, with the dust of centuries, and still she pursues her career of usefulness. It will remain so, until Time shall be no longer. This teaches me that to succeed I must be persevering, indefatigable, resolute :

—“‘Whoever, indeed,
Is useful, cannot be unhappy. This creed
Fills the void of existence.’

The golden fruit of my victory over self will not be given to me to-day—nor to-morrow; but I feel within an undying faith that God loves me, and protects me. Joy and strength will be born of the trials which beset me at every cross-road in life. ‘Pleasant pastures and still waters.’ I can struggle—I can wait.”

She stood up before him with a hopeful, resolute look, making a resemblance between her own sweet face and the exalted one of Joan d’Arc, that “queen, virgin type of thought, pure, brave, and ‘high.’” Dr. Brandenburg only sighed and turned away; and Electra, catching up a book which she had been reading, bade him “good-night,” and glided out of the room.

Thus closed her last night at Beechmoor, the last night she would ever rest beneath that roof—at least for many sad, uncertain years.

“Alas for the bright promise of our youth!
How soon the golden chords of Hope are broken!
How soon we find that dreams we trusted most
Are very shadows!”



CHAPTER XIV.

EARLY dawn in April, and the sky in the East was flushing rosily above the tallest peaks of the hills. The trees nodded their vernal-tinted plumes in the soft winds, laden with the delicious, spicy aromas of Spring. The rolling wealth of meadowlands, the fields, the shaded dells, the dreamily lighted ravines, on all sides poured forth the beautiful blessing, the glorious gladness, the exultant joy of Nature in her own surpassing loveliness. The forests were dark and entrancingly cool with the umbrageous shadows of broadspreading beeches, monarch oaks, and graceful elms and sycamores. Here and there, like a blush, the red-buds lifted their roseate bloom; and pearly-white, ceraceous clusters amid the polished broccolo-hued leaves, told where the dogwood grew; and the velvety mead stretching off to the west, where it met the clear brook purling in its crystal beauty, was embroidered with violets azure and golden; and there, too, the bloodroot raised its queenly coronal of snowy petals above the pink-lipped anemones, and bell-like ranunculus. Wild grape-vines leaped from branch to branch, trailing their rich luxuriance in graceful festoons and prodigal profusion, forming bowers of rare beauty and densest shade; and beneath all, the wild, sweet eglantine raised its fresh loveliness to kiss the scarlet-creeper,

twisting and pending its trumpet-flowers, and verdant, spicular-leaves over the rail-fences, and along through the "blue-grass," waving its feathery sprays in the breath of the gentle breeze. Shy rabbits skipped through the underbrush, and birds overhead warbled whole gushes of melody, as they skimmed through the amber-lighted air toward the blue battlements of heaven. The sun had risen, and the sky had "put off its leaden-gray for mother-o'-pearl," and the hills and valleys in responsive love brightened beneath his golden smiles. The brook rippled its fluid silver; and the dew-drops turned their pendent spray to diamonds, crystals, and rubies, as they blazed in beauty beneath his glance. A morning in the country! Can anything be more beautiful? Aurora awakening from her rosy sleep, and beaming like a dream of Eden on a world which were darkness void of her love! The trees, birds, flowers, plants, streams, all expressing their joy at the release from the lethargy in which the purple mantle of Night had so lately enveloped them. All nature proclaiming the glorious beauties and beneficent goodness of Omnipotence!

Miss Rutherford had been wandering amid this waste of loveliness for hours. She came along the broad-shelled walk now with a lagging footstep, her eyes resting tenderly upon the gay parterres of flowers. When she reached the house, she paused in the vestibule, and took her seat upon the marble step-stone. Her last morning amid the vernal beauties of Beechmoor! The thought almost stifled her; but quickly controlling the

tender emotion, she fixed her dark, mysterious eyes upon the goal of destiny which beckoned her forward, without allowing another thought of the beautiful past. Firmly closing her hands over her life-work—resolute, resigned, exalted by her sacrifice upon the altar of filial affection—she bowed her head submissively to the decree of Fate, which shut her forever out from those finer things the world calls happiness.

Dr. Brandenburg came out from his study, and seeing her gray dress in the doorway, he joined her. She saw that his face was pale and sad, and her young heart grew very tender toward him, in gratitude for his great love for her.

"You are out early, Electra," he said, in a quiet, calm way that touched her inexpressibly.

"Yes, I have been bidding farewell to the dear old haunts I love; for it may be that I will never see them again."

An expression of pain passed over Dr. Brandenburg's face, as he said in a voice tremulous with emotion he could not, and did not care to control:

"God forbid! Beechmoor could hold no charms for me, if I believed you would never brighten it with your dear presence again. No doubt, Electra, after the grave closes over me, you will stand just here, and look on the stone that marks my final resting-place."

"Do not talk so, dear friend—it pains me; and besides, death holds allegiance to none. I may moulder to dust long ere the hair silvers about your temples," said Electra.

"Hush," whispered the Doctor; "don't mention your death—it stifles me!—Are you carrying this away from Beechmoor as a souvenir?"

He took, with a touch of tenderness, from her hand a cluster of blue and yellow violets, mingled with a feathery tuft of fern-leaves and moss.

"Yes," replied Electra, "I gathered them to make a little *bijou* of an herbal for my herbarium. Cousin William taught me long ago to keep one; and this Spring I have commenced another. I expect to gather a great many new specimens in Georgia."

"You are fond of botanizing, then?"

"Yes; I confess to a weakness for such dainty bits of nature. Flowers, to me, are eloquent teachers of innocence and purity—they are the angels of the leaves."

The Doctor looked away in the distance and murmured, dreamily: "My library is full of books on insects and flowers, and all kinds of productions; and time was when I used to glare fiercely through a microscope at the *dissecta membra* of flies, etc., and bits of mosses and violets. Sometimes I have thought myself almost a gipsy, in a half-civilized way. Tramping through moist, country roads, and camping out in the woodlands, have been the objectives of very many of my dreams. And, in humoring such fancies, I have read no end of books on *Gilanos* and *Gilanas*, and studied Spanish, and walked many a mile over country knolls and through country by-ways, "Coddington lens" in hand, making believe to study minute specks of shrubbery, till one might almost have thought me a

naturalist run mad. I remember walking some eight miles one morning in the early Spring, while the snow was still upon the ground, keeping a bright eye ahead for gnats and gnats' eggs, and pouncing upon every bit of greenery which came within my compass. I was raised in the city, you know, but I was never intended to be one of its haunters. I hate the smoke and noise, and the wretched sluice-ways of life known as streets. But put me out among the hills, and I am at home. Cities are dismal places to men like myself. You would smile could you once understand how uneasy I am in crowds and on sidewalks. As a boy I used to say, 'When my ship comes in, always provided it don't come wrong side up, I shall shake the city's dust from my shoes and burrow in the country, where I can lie out in the sunshine (with a blue cotton umbrella over my head if I like), and be happy after my own heart.' And I kept my word. Better be Robinson Crusoe upon his sea-girt island, than a phill-horse in such noisy mills. (I am a believer with Ruskin: 'To watch the corn grow, and the blossoms set; to draw hard breath over ploughshare or spade; to read, to think, to love, to hope, to pray—these are the things that make men happy; they have always had the power of doing this, they never will have the power to do more. The world's prosperity or adversity depends upon these few things; but upon iron, or glass, or electricity, or steam, in nowise.'")

Before Electra could reply a servant informed them that breakfast was prepared, and they went in together.

The breakfast-room was such a pleasant place with its bright carpet and flowers, and muslin window-drapery! And there was never a more elegantly appointed table than the one which stood in the centre of the apartment, tempting them with its snowy damask, its *Sevres* porcelain and its massive silver-plate, its nice light rolls, birds, golden butter, cream, strawberries, and *Mocha*—the latter curling its delicious aroma through the air.

Electra sat before the urn, and while she filled the Doctor's little gilded cup, she said, in her earnest, pleasant way:

"How I shall miss this clear, fragrant Mocha when I am far away! I have so enjoyed it! For, do you know, my friend, no German was ever wedded to his meerschaum, no Ottoman to his seraglio, no Frenchman to *belle Paris*—as I to coffee!"

There she sat poising her silver spoon first on the side of the porcelain cup, then coyly bending her head and pouting her little lips for a sip of the fragrant decoction. The Doctor gazed upon her—that face which always came between him and Heaven! How could he part with it! It would be like blotting the sun from the earth.

"Electra," he said, suddenly, "why will you not abandon this idea? Why not remain at Beechmoor always—as you are now? He looked at her so eagerly, so earnestly, it was hard to refuse.

For an instant she wavered, asking herself, "What is it that holds me back? I can allege nothing but the stubborn denial of my selfish heart. Oh that God

would point out by some undoubted sign which is the path of duty!"

Then the impulse passed, and placing her hand over her heart to still its twinge of pain and regret, she said:

"My friend, one can sacrifice everything to friendship, but honor and justice. Don't press me further."

"I know that, Electra; and I know another thing, it would be generous to endure something for friendship—even at the sacrifice of a little pride." He said this reproachfully, and Electra was hurt, but her reply was calm and positive:

"Every one must fill his vocation in life. Mine I have selected. I am sorry that it meets with your displeasure. I can only regret it. How sad a mission it is, you understand as well as I. It requires great courage to live up to it—more almost than my burdened heart can give. Sisyphus tasks—Tantalus miseries—Damocletian swords are all embodied in this frail hope of mine, which it is mingled bliss and agony to entertain. You should not attempt to discourage me; you should point to the sunny valleys of delight while I struggle in the Slough of Despond. Oh! if I could only tell you what an impenetrable ægis your cheering words would place over my heart—shielding me from any care which may assail me! But even though you deny this armor to me, whatever difficulties beset me I shall trample right over them. With me, to resolve is to act; to act, is to conquer. And you might as well attempt to galvanize that marble Hermes upon the

mantle, and bid him fly, as to turn me from my purpose."

"I believe it." The doctor pushed his plate away, and resting his elbows upon the table, hid his face in his hands. Moments passed by in profound silence. Then he took out his watch, and noting the hour said, mechanically, "By the time you get on your bonnet, and say good-bye to Mrs. Barnaby, the carriage will be at the door. We have half an hour in which to drive to the station."

Rising, he passed from the room into his study—that calm retreat where he ever took refuge in his sorrow. When he rejoined Electra, his pallid face told what a struggle he had had with his own heart. The carriage-door closed them in together. Electra drew down her veil to hide the tears falling over the flushing of her cheeks: she realized, too, that she risked destroying her mind's supremacy over her heart, when she looked back. It was enough for her to take unto herself the consoling thought that her path lay straight and even before her, and if she had faith, Heaven would take care of her. Ah! indeed is the hand merciful which holds a veil to the future's face! They reached the post-station, and after a few moments' delay Electra found herself seated in the train; and Dr. Brandenburg went off to get her "tickets." She was commended to the particular attention of the conductor, and then, as he slipped the bits of yellow card-board in her travelling-satchel, the Doctor whispered:

"Electra, it is not too late to recall your decision!

Oh, my God! it so pains me to part with you; and yet I have no right to withhold you from your fate, if you deny the blessing to me."

"My friend, my decision is unalterable. If you do love me, spare me these entreaties!"

The engine shrieked its shrill warning—the train, heavily freighted, moved slowly from the station. Partings were hurriedly given, and none noticed the haggard-faced man who pressed kisses upon the little ungloved hand he held.

"Good-bye! my own noble friend. My heart is too full for words." But he was gone, and the sound of her sweet voice was drowned in the din and confusion of hurrying feet and attending excitement of getting under-way. She leaned from the window to catch a last glimpse of her friend, but he had entered the carriage and the horses' heads had been turned toward Beechmoor. At the thought of his love for her, his utter loneliness now that she was gone—and again, as she recalled the expression of that sad, pallid, icy face that had looked into her own with such lonesome eyes and quivering lips—the tears came fast and thick, and lowering her veil once more, she sank back in her seat, and covering her face with her hands wept bitterly. The last link that bound her to the past was broken; the only friend she could claim had disappeared. Henceforth alone—all alone! No! God was a Father to the fatherless, and in Him would she put her trust—His was a love unfailing. In this sea of

faith the orphan cast the anchor of her one desolate hope.

"Fresh as the first beam glittering on a sail
That brings our friends up from the under world;
Sad as the last which reddens over one
That sinks with all we love below the verge;
So sad, so fresh, the days that are no more!"



CHAPTER XV.

SILENCE had spread her sheltering wing over the slumbering world. The inconstant moon's silvery light hung like a veil over all, and the evening breeze, gentle as that which plays "among the spices of Sabæ," lingered with the flowers, coquetting with their perfume, that filled all the air like frankincense from some ancient odorous censer, and the glistening stars glowed goldenly upon the brow of Night bending over the silent earth as a gentle mother over a tired child.

William Hayden lay upon the velvet car-seat, and with his head leaning against the fluted window-frame, fixed his dark, sad eyes upon the smiling moon, while he murmured over to his own heart, "We have all to be laid upon an altar; we have all, as it were, to be subjected to the action of fire." Eight months had passed since Electra's flight from the "Grange," and since that time, he, too, had been a wanderer in the world. It is impossible to delineate his storm of rage and anguish when he learned of the interview between his grandmother and the orphan girl, whom he so passionately adored. Immediately he announced his intention of overtaking her, and making her his wife. His mother prostrated herself before him, and plead

for mercy upon her breaking heart. Mrs. Dudley, her sternness and hauteur all gone, wrung her hands, and while bitter tears fell over her withered face, implored him to remain at home, not to blast his pure name—the fame of his family—himself—her, his mother. Geryon could not have looked grimmer, nor Brimo seemed more fierce and terrible when summoned to earth by magic arts, than this man, as with arms folded above his sick and panting heart, he said, while an expression of withering scorn writhed like a blight over his handsome, clear-cut face :

“Mercy? And did you grant it to that pure, serene spirit—that beautiful, angelic girl, who has been for years the sunlight of your home, and my one dream of happiness? Did you not mercilessly scourge her with the thong of bitterness in your natures until you maddened her?—until you turned her adrift on a selfish, heartless world, without a friend—without a dollar? Mark me! The fate of that girl, be it evil, lies on your souls, and like the brand of Cain, it will veil God’s face from you forever! To me she has supplied the place of Christianity! I never think of her, that I do not think of heaven! She is the idol that I have placed upon the pedestal in the secret chamber of my soul! I shall follow her, nor look upon your faces again until I have found her, and thrown around her the tender, protecting arms of my love. Mercy, indeed! ‘Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy!’ Christ has promised this much; but He counts not, in this, those hearts that are dry and arid as the sands of Sahara!

Honor? yes; and it is to this secret watchword of my heart that I am listening now! It is this bright motto upon our FAMILY ESCUTCHEON, I am resolved to preserve in its pristine brightness and unrivalled grandeur!”

With a bitter, scoffing laugh, he had then turned from them, and self-exiled from the haunts of his boyhood, had gone in pursuit of that which was ever to remain to him a delicious breath from the “Aiden” which the Arabian beholds afar off upon the desert, yet which he never finds. The shade of green-palms—the aroma of spices—the sparkle of fountains—the beauties of Bendemeer and Pæstum—could be seen in the dim light of dreams, like the weird, shifting “FATA MOR-GÁNA.” But enjoyed? Never. Only Tantalus visions of fruits and sparkling waters, after all! Only these—and nothing more! “Time, the tomb-builder,” could alone decide if he would ever find the lost pearl of his soul. He read the reply to the newspaper advertisement, which he had ordered to be inserted in the daily press, and whose perusal had so affected Electra that day in the “study” at Beechmoor, but he could obtain no clue further than that the money and notice had been delivered at the office-door—by whom, or when, there was no room left for conjecture. To and fro, ceaseless and hoping on, with the faith of Orpheus seeking Eurydice, he roamed over the country—North, South, East, West. Sometimes a glance under a jaunty hat, the flash of a dark eye, the clear glow of a face, would mislead him, raise the flame of hope, as sud-

denly to extinguish it—leaving him desolate and lone as before. William Hayden was possessed of a grand nature, one which recognized no obstacles in his path, but that it had equal strength and fortitude to grasp and conquer them. Difficulty meant *stimulus* to him, just as wine was stimulus to others. In these eight months he had been able to accomplish nothing that he did not already know; but the mystery that died with Electra Dudley in the little village of N—— gave no sign of resurrection. With a heart overburdened with its weight of woe, which he began to believe was indeed his “heritage here below,” he was travelling from Columbus to Baltimore. Now, Fortune, like Love, is fickle, and chameleon-like in her moods. Her smiles fall thickly as her frowns; and like Love—

—————“She joys in mystery;
And when you think her countless miles away,
Is lurking close at hand.”

William Hayden’s melancholy reverie was interrupted by the conversation of two stylishly-dressed and beautiful ladies sitting directly in front of him. The first words he caught arrested his attention, and for many moments afterward held him spell-bound. One lady asked of the other:

“How did *you* learn more good of Electra Dudley than any one else was ever able to discover?”

“By faithful inquiry regarding her elopement. I was very much attached to Electra. She was such a gentle, lovely character, that I did not believe her ca-

pable of committing error. A good name is a pearl above price. Nothing that we win or inherit can supply its place, if once it be wrested from us. You know that it is proverbial that women love to slander each other. Without doubt this is true; but I am not among the number. I believe, if a friend is censured or scandalized it is our duty to defend—and be the last to believe! Especially is it wrong to pronounce judgment when we do not understand both sides of the question. Remember the old apothegm: ‘One story’s good till another is told.’”

The first speaker, with a supercilious elevation of her fair brow and a light ironical laugh, replied:

“You are the same Laura of old! For my part, I believe in being philanthropic too, where one *can* be so without danger to character or social position; but this fashion to which some of our women of the *beau monde* descend—this bending from a high estate to pick a modern Pariah out of the dust—I confess I do not aspire to such deeds of glory. I rather think I like for my right hand to know what my left hand doeth, and the world to be aware, to boot, that they are neither of them idle; nor do I consider it either wise or elevating to open your doors and unfold your sympathetic heart to a woman who has not ‘scaped calumny’ (that, too, when there are pure and virtuous people left for association!), simply because you went to school with her once, and she was a sweet, gentle creature! O, Laura! fie upon you! Do you not know you stand upon the extreme and ‘dangerous

edge of things?' Have you forgotten how boldly and skilfully Browning handles this most æsthetic subject? If so, polish up your memory!"

William Hayden sat still, bating his breath to listen while he was half-stifled with anger, but the lady at whom the sarcasm was levelled never allowed the faintest blush to stain the even pallor of her cheek; and her voice was sweet as before—only thrilling with a noble, elevating eloquence, which touched the lava-heated heart of William like divine balm.

"You are the same 'Mary' of old, too. I am sorry you are so! Education should have enlarged your views, and increased your philanthropy toward all in life. You have forgotten in the midst of your worldliness the words of our Saviour to repentant Mary Magdalen: 'Neither will I condemn thee. Go, and sin no more!' And again, those that denoted so much of the moral grandeur—the exquisite sweetness of His nature: 'He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone!' Mary, can you—can I—can any of us raise voice against her? *Ought* we to do so? Are we not all more or less inclined to evil? Do we purify and ennoble ourselves by tearing down the pedestal upon which another stands? Even otherwise—even if she erred—would we not be more exalted in shielding and pitying than in defaming her? Are any of us greater than our blessed, sweet Saviour, Jesus Christ, who by His passion and cross died to redeem us? Who, through sadness and grief of heart, and with His royal and sacred head pierced by the crown of purple

thorns, and His flesh nailed to the shivering cross, yet felt His heart thrill with large pity for the erring children of His love, and murmured, 'God forgive them, they know not what they do!' I say, Mary, are you, are any of us undefiled and pure enough to refuse the hand which Jesus clasped; to bless the head which Jesus blessed; to lead into the paths of pleasantness and peace the footsteps which have wandered; to recall to the 'fold' of God the precious lambs which have strayed?"

The hand of Laura West lightly touched, then clasped about that of Mary Baird. The holy face beaming with sublime, pure, celestial beauty was turned toward her.

"Really, Laura," said Mrs. Baird, with a stain of pink upon her aristocratically delicate cheek, "this is all unnecessary. I already belong to the Church. You are too late to make a proselyte of me! And even were it different, I am wise enough to stick to common sense against all the world; nor could I be persuaded to anything evidently contrary to it; no sophistries, no tricks, no *convincing eloquence* could lead me astray, let them be never so many, and plied as often as possible."

Her visible *brusquerie*, her covert sneer, sent the blood flushing to Mrs. West's face, but she turned away without reply.

William Hayden did not know how he did it—he was half mad. At any rate, when he came to a realization of self again, he was sitting beside Mrs. West, weeping, while she recounted to him all she knew of Mrs. Pemberton, as she persisted in calling his aunt.

She could only give a graphic sketch, as she would get off at the next station, but she assured him that the calumny upon the dead was undeserved and unjust. And she gave him her address in New York city, ere she bade him "farewell," that he might call upon her if he desired her assistance in his prosecution of the search. Then the train ran in at the station, and he found himself once more alone with his thoughts. Ah! they were bright as Heaven now! The shrill shriek of the engine cleft the silence—another from the distance answered the signal-voice, waking the echoes of the surrounding hills—again—again—again. Waiting for the opposite train to pass, the delay was scarcely more than momentary before they were together. William Hayden cast his eyes down upon the platform, and from thence to the window of the opposite car. Gods! what was it that made him start and turn pale—then lean with outstretched arms? Only the sweet face of a girl asleep at the open window. The red lips half shut, showing a gleam of pearl, even in that wan light; the wealth of brown, braided hair, and over it all the soft flush of quiet repose, sleeping like sunlight on her eyes.

"Electra! Electra!"

The wild cry rang out like an angry wail, and rustled the dun mantle of night with its vehemence; then, the trains sped on with their freights of joy and sorrow!

"Gone, all gone! and the wail of the night-wind sounds human!"

CHAPTER XVI.

IN the breakfast-room of a handsome villa on the top of a grand plateau three or four hundred feet above the town of B——, fifteen miles distant, overlooking a beautiful pastoral valley, with the horizon afar off spreading into the illimitable, May breezes tossing his hair to and fro with wanton coquetry, and fanning his cheek into smiles, sat Aubin McDowell, an Englishman by birth, and married these ten years to an aristocratic and wealthy Georgian. He was engaged now examining a beautiful pæonia which he held in his hand—a delicate pink casing, enclosing a cream-colored, graceful, and fragrant mass, with crimson petals still farther within. So intense was his admiration for this wonderful bit of nature, that even the delicious strawberries confronting him escaped his observation entirely. His wife sat opposite him. And so lightly had she borne the weight of matrimonial cares, that none would have imagined that so graceful and charming a woman had long since passed into her thirties. Her dark, satiny-looking hair was put smoothly back from her proud face, and confined with a pearl comb. As she sat there in her snowy muslin dress, there seemed to linger around her the cool beauty of a Grecian statue. There was a haughty expression of pride, almost defiance, upon her full red lip. Evi-

dently our lady was out of humor this bright May morning, fragrant as it was with the breath of orange and jasmine, and musical with the warblings of bright-winged birds. She busied her snowy hands with the massive silver coffee-urn, salver, and cream-jug, gave her plate an angry little shove, which sent it spinning off the table, thus destroying the even number of breakfast-plates in her favorite Dresden china-set. A flush rose to her face, and her lips curved almost spitefully:

"I don't care!"

Her husband looked up, fixed his kind, serious eyes earnestly upon her, and asked gently: "Effie, what has put you in a pet? Surely you can find no fault with our breakfast."

"Make merry over my discomfiture if you choose. As my husband, the whole world accords you that privilege. One thing, however, is certain. I was never crossed at home, and I never expected when I married you, to be tyrannized over in the way you show your authority."

"Authority! Little woman, you must be dreaming! Come, come, now, it pains me to see you thus give way to pettishness and ill-humor."

"Pettishness! ill-humor!"—she flashed her eyes angrily at him.

"Don't be so fiery, Effie! You look fierce as Hecate!"

"That is right; add insult to injury. As I said before, it is your prerogative!" She was voluntarily lashing herself into a fury.

"What have I done? What injury have you endured?" asked Mr. McDowell, pleasantly.

"Oh, none! it is no injury to chain a woman to one hearthstone for ten years!" she replied, with a toss of her head.

"Where do you wish to go, Effie?" Her husband's mien grew stern and altered. "What station in life is a wife and mother so fitted to adorn as her own home?"

"Oh, yes; that is always the cry! It works well to have a pretty serf to conduct your household. I'll roundly wager, if we turned the men into our places the song would change."

"Effie, permit me to commend to you that article of Ruskin's you read yesterday; it epitomizes the duty of every wife and mother," said Mr. McDowell, coldly.

"Oh, yes," replied Effie, tartly. "Quote John Ruskin, and tell me about my mission and my duty. That is right. Let a woman marry, and ever after be hampered down by *family duties*. We must all be Portias, Licinias, and Cornelias! We must see to the baking of puddings and pies; we must darn hose, sew on shirt-buttons, and patch old rents and educate our children. And I have a heavier chain yet to wear—overseeing the plantation during your frequent absences from home. Now, I have taken the order of no Church, nor do I aspire to be a feminine Trophonius, or troglodyte! The basis to such a structure of society as the South is at present erecting is false, and will take us back to the dark horrors of the Middle Ages.

So I, for one, shall no longer make myself a salient stepping-stone at the threshold of your home."

"What do you desire, Effie?"

"Desire? I desire to go away from this hateful old place. I want leisure to pursue my intellectual inclinations, and I *want society*."

She spoke impetuously—angrily.

"My wife! Let me tell you something—something worth knowing! You must *try* to be happy, else you never will be so! You must *try* to be contented, else you will always be miserable. I know what you want. You want to go to Europe. I cannot take you, for Allie's health will not permit it; but we can go to Newport, to Long Branch, to Saratoga, or Cape May—where you will—and if our little girl improves, perhaps we will be able to sail in the autumn. She must now, however, be our first and tenderest consideration."

"The same old story! Don't repeat it; I am weary hearing it."

She rose hastily, and with a little backward wave of her hand and an angry flush upon her brow she swept out of the room, pausing at the door to say, with premeditated malice:

"Heaven save any woman from marrying a widower! If he does not make her rue it, I am not your lawful wife!"

She jerked the door violently to, after her.

Aubin McDowell buried his face in his hands. He loved his wife tenderly—dearly; but it was the second love of his life, and however he may have battled

against it, Memory ever waved her gray and golden wing above him, casting shadows on his heart. By that first wife he had had one child—Alice—the remote subject of the morning's dispute; and on this child he lavished a passionate idolatry, which only strong men are capable of feeling. Mrs. McDowell knew this, and it was the source of a gnawing and constant jealousy, which fed upon her very vitals. Her own children, Ernst and Valerie, received only half the adulation that was lavished on Alice—and they were healthy, and rosy, and handsome as could well be! She!—she was an angel!—one of those who come with pledged promise not to stay. She was ethereal almost; no taint of earthliness defiled her. This it was that wrapped her father's heart so around her!

"Papa, my own—" Two soft, white arms were put around Aubin McDowell's neck, and a fair cheek nestled down upon his dark hair, just beginning to be tinged with gray. "Tell Allie what troubles you?"

"My precious," with a strangely tender light upon his face Aubin McDowell raised himself from his disconsolate attitude, and drawing his daughter to a seat upon his knee pressed her to his heart.

"What is it?"

The clear eyes were looking into his own; the sweet warm breath was stealing upward to his cheek. He could not dissimulate, but he attempted it.

"My daughter, I am troubled about you—anxious regarding your health—and it pains me to see this

flush on your face so often! What can papa do for you?"

"Tell me what it is that grieves you. There is something else; for I passed mamma in the hall, and she looked angry," answered the soft voice of the girl, conscious that another weight than the one he had confessed, sat like an incubus upon his heart. Still the clear, sweet eyes looked into the depths of his own clouded ones. He saw that only a candid confession would satisfy her.

"Well, pet, there is another little care, but trifling to me compared with my anxiety about you. Your mamma is desirous to go to England, and seems very resolute and persistent about it, and I—"

Alice interrupted him:

"Why do you not go, Papa?"

"I fear the sea-voyage for you. You are not strong enough to bear it."

"Is this all that prevents you from going?"

She rose from his embrace and stood beside him, a strange brilliancy in her eyes.

"Yes, sweet one, and sufficient."

"Papa, go! I *want* to go. I will be able to bear it, in the fall. I think it would do me good—*do me good*, Papa, remember that! You and mamma can go to Long Branch, and Miss Electra and the children and I can stay here, and be happy, too, until your return. Ah! will you not sail in the autumn?"

"Would you indeed love to go, my darling?"

"Indeed, I would!"

"Well, then, your pleasure shall decide the matter. We will go soon as you like."

"Not *now*, Papa darling, for I want to spend this summer here! I want to see every flower fade—to feel every breeze sailing by and over the plateau, for I never expect—"

She hesitated.

"What is it, Allie?"

Her father spoke encouragingly, holding out his arms.

"Oh! my own dear Papa, I want to ask you never, *never* to refuse mamma anything on my account. She is very sweet, very good to me, and though she scolds at you for loving me more than you do Valerie and Ernst, she often slips into my room and kisses me, and smooths back my hair, just as I fancy my angel mamma did when I was a wee baby."

Mr. McDowell could only kiss the upturned face; he was very much affected.

The little mentor continued.

"You know, Papa, you and dear mamma have a great many years to live together. It is a great deal easier to find fault with each other than rectify the errors into which that fault-finding will lead you; you will both be discontented, wretched, uneasy, always—if these little tares, springing up now and then, are allowed to grow, strengthen, overshadow, and finally uproot the dainty, odorous flowers of affection. You are losing a great many happy moments by these little thrusts at arm's length. It will not grow better by and

by. Now is the time to eradicate the evil. Make friends with mamma, and give her those enjoyments she requires and deserves. Look for the beauties in her nature, and if there is a bramble of asperity, put your hand on it, and crush it as you would a thistle, and you will never feel its sting; but, Papa, let it be *une main de fer gantée de velours* with which you do it. And between me and my little brother and sister, don't make such a marked difference. It pains mamma, and, youthful as they are, it mortifies the children. Remember, Papa,

"We oft destroy the present joy,
For future hopes, and praise them,
While flowers as sweet bloom at our feet,
If we'd but stoop to raise them."

"*Mignonne!*"

Aubin McDowell's voice wavered with emotion, but Alice did not pause to notice it; she talked on in a dreamy tone, as if to herself.

"Yes, you and mamma have a great many years to live together after the daisies have grown above my grave; that is the reason why I want to go to England. Buried there, I think the dear little blossoms will spring from my dust. And then, when the May comes again with singing birds and budding flowers, you must go to the little mound where I sleep, and see the daisies bloom at sunrise. I should not like to die in America; it is not *home* to me, you know, Papa."

"Don't, darling; don't! It pains me so, when you

talk of dying. What would I do without my little Allie?"

The tears were raining down on her sunny hair as he pressed her head convulsively to his breast.

"Ah, Papa, and it pains me more to know you haven't faith in God's mercy," said Alice, sorrowfully.

The man held her to his heart with a gesture of passionate despair, as if defying even heaven to tear her from his arms; and then releasing her, turned suddenly and left the room.

Tears dimmed Alice's eyes as she stood looking out on the spring sky, which was

"As blue as Aaron's priestly robe
To Aaron when he took it off to die;"

and she sighed sadly:

"Beautiful world! it is hard to die and leave you! I love you so, O world! not as mamma does—for the glitter, and pomp, and wealth—but oh, I love you for your great rivers, and mountains, and smiling meadows, and sunshine, and birds; and I love you because I will at last lay down on your breast and sleep that sleep whose peace surpasseth understanding."



CHAPTER XVII.

VALERIE, Ernst—come, dears ; the hall-clock has pointed to nine some minutes ago.”

“Oh, Miss Electra, I do so wish we could have holiday to-day ; it is so hard to go to school all the time !” cried Valerie.

“All work and no play—that’s the rule in our school,” growled the boy.

“Not so, dear Ernst. Miss Rutherford only fulfils mamma’s requirements ; and since you have been tossing the ‘graces’ about for half an hour, don’t you think you would be happier to rest and study a little while ?”

This last remark was made by Alice McDowell to the two pouting children, who stood with “grace” hoops and sticks in their hands, as if exceedingly loth to leave their pleasant pastime for the studious quiet of the school-room. How very pretty she looked ! So soft, so gentle ! Her bright hair gleaming and rippling about her brow, which was veined, like ivory, with slender azure lines at the temples. The beautifully contoured cheeks ; the perfect lips, pencilled with scarlet ; her delicate profile, with its finely-curved, transparent nostril ; her long-fringed eyelids dreamily drooping over the reddish-brown depths of her radiant eyes—wistful, sad, holy ; her form graceful, willowy, per-

fect ! At the sound of her voice the cloud vanished from her little brother’s face, and, springing eagerly toward her, he asked :

“Are you going to school to-day ?”

“Yes, darling, I feel so much better that I think I shall venture ; and then I so love to be with Miss Rutherford !”

As she spoke she laid her hand with an affectionate caress upon Electra’s graceful shoulder, and, after a moment’s delay in conversation, Electra opened the school-room door and they went in together.

“Oh ! I wish I was a flower, a pebble, a bird—anything—*anything* but a little girl that had to be martyred through the June days with these dry, hateful books !” said Valerie, flouncing herself pettishly into a chair.

Electra took a seat beside the child and passed her arm gently about her shoulder.

“My little girl, you are a flower, but God has endowed you with a gift above these stars that lift their sweetness and light from the tawny breast of the earth only to blossom for a season. He has given you a soul, that when you sink to your eternal sleep here, you may bloom again in the skies an immortelle—‘Everlasting to everlasting !’ You are a pebble, when contrasted with the angels in Heaven—the geniuses of earth—the God who made you ; but this same soul exalts you above the waves which might wash you into the ocean and the reptile which might trail its slime upon you, and the dull strata of sand,

clay, or coal which might hide you from the light forever. And when the sun darkens and God's wrath is over the world, you will realize what a tiny pebble you are in the vast universe. Do you remember in the *Dies Iræ* I read aloud to Alice the other day, the description of that last Day of Judgment?"

"Yes, ma'am, I do. Miss Electra, please say it for us again—and tell us who wrote it."

The children sat beside her, and Alice left her Ma-caulay unopened, while Electra repeated *DE NOVISSIMO JUDICIO*, and told them it was supposed to have been written by a monk, who saw it all in a vision, and waking transcribed it upon parchment, as a warning to those who sometimes think with "infinite terror of being found guilty before the Just Judge."

"Why, Miss Electra, that is just the way Bunyan wrote '*PILGRIM'S PROGRESS*!'" cried Ernst, eagerly—"don't you remember?"

"Yes, dear; and think, Bunyan was only a tinker, after all," said Valerie, in a patronizing tone.

Electra rested her hand on the boy's head, and smiled when she saw the indignant flush mount to his brow at his sister's words.

"What if he was a tinker? He was a man of sense, and his Castle Beautiful, and low, green Valley of Humiliation, and Enchanted Ground, and Delectable Mountains will endure as long as Time! I am sure I would like to be a tinker too, if I could be as smart as Bunyan!"

"My boy, you are right. It is the brain and the

heart that *make the man*, and not the blood! An ignorant peer can be looked upon with scorn, while a farmer's son—like Burns—can win immortal fame, if he only tries. A boy who grows up into manhood without cultivating himself, commits an error which can never be rectified. The purest, noblest, holiest sources of happiness are in the mind! And although it is pleasant to play 'bat and ball,' and toss the shuttle, and the 'graces,' such enjoyments cannot always satisfy you; and when you find yourself backward in your studies, and read of great men, who needed only opportunity to immortalize themselves, and that you had all, and neglected them—how will you be able to estimate your loss in language? Nothing but the bitterest emotions of regret can express it. Employ your time profitably, my children, and try to fit yourselves for the exalted positions which every true-hearted, intelligent man and woman should occupy before God and the world. Try to be happy, and even though the lessons are dry and hard, they will not seem so by and by, and when you grow older and study the sciences, you will say the childish school-days held you captive in the Valley of Eshcol."

The children were then allotted their tasks, and Electra took her seat at her desk with a book opened before her; but as the hours slipped by, the far-away look in her sweet, large eyes told that her heart had sped past its prison bars out into the world of dreams.

It was the 25th of June!—an anniversary which must ever be fraught with the most bitter memories for her.

The blood pulsed through her heart in drops of crimson-hued agony, as she realized her utter desolation in life, and that henceforward and forever she must live alone; but not without friendship, she thanked God! And the vistas grew bright with the light of faith; and even as Jacob sleeping at the foot of the angel's ladder, saw that "all things are less dreadful than they seem," she knew that her life would not be barren of joy and comfort. She felt the weight of the Divine Hand upon her womanly brow, and knew that she was allotted to a particular task. And though a strong arm might never clasp her, though childish lips might never lisp "Mamma," and kiss her pallid cheek, still she would be happy in doing good. Her life should be finished—perfect as she could make it with her poor earthly heart as the designer. She could work only "between the lights" of earth and heaven—but God would strengthen her when she grew weary! She remembered the sublime words of Isaiah: "I have trodden the wine-press alone; and of the people there was none with me. And I looked and there was none to help, and I wondered that there was none to uphold; therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me." And she was comforted. She felt that the solitude of a lonely life ever yearning, unsatisfied for human love, ever craving sympathy in grief which must remain unshared—even closing Hope's eyes in death, and seeing Faith's sweet face marbled to the whiteness of eternal rest—through all she felt God's everlasting hand, drawing her "onward, upward;" she felt His presence in the solemn

silence of her soul, and though her dumb lips never spoke of her sorrow—though she trod "the wine-press alone," there was a staff upon which to lean, firm as the "Rock of Ages"—God's mercy.

Zephyrs on weary wings gently floated through the open windows, dropping their balmy perfume, like etherial incense, as they passed. The sweet stillness of the day reigned unbroken save by the hum of the childish voices learning irksome tasks. It was a real Southern scene which met her gaze as she turned toward the window with a wearied sense of *ennui*. The golden light of the summer sun shone through the boughs of the pine-trees, in one of which sat a turtle-dove soothing the silence with its melodious "coo-coo-coo." Parterres of rich roses, of Bendemeer, Pæstum, and Lamarque, raised their creamy and scarlet chalices up to the light of yellow jasmine stars gleaming overhead, mingling their odors with the breath of the honeysuckle and golden woodbine, until the air hung freighted with love for the azure-winged butterflies and the gold-dusted bees, busily, murmuringly, circling with ceaseless hum through the amber air. Far off the green, fresh rice-fields lay like wide *sabanas* of peace. And away to the left the lone, dark forests on the hills rustled their leaves together like the sweep of a velvet pall. The sunshine rippled over seas of grass, and played "hide-and-go-seek" with the shadows in the mossy hollows, and coquetted with the ruby heads of the clover and the snow-brier blossoms hanging in the rocky clefts and fearlessly nodding their beautiful faces

over a frowning gorge, where a stream dashed itself into silvery spray and sparkling foam, and floated off at last between the green sedges that fringed the sandy bed where the pearly topaz and ruby pebbles hid.

From this beautiful view Electra turned her lonesome eyes to the sweet, gentle face of her friend and beloved pupil, Alice, and the dark look which rested upon her brow instantly vanished, and, raising her voice, she said :

"Alice, dear, come here."

The young girl rose, and advancing took a seat beside her teacher.

"Shall we read now?"

"Yes, Miss Electra. And oh ! my lesson to-day is so unusually interesting ! It is Macaulay's paper on Warren Hastings. I have not read half of it yet ; but I like it very much. Don't you think, though, that I am getting on slowly considering I admire these 'Es-says' so?"

"That does not matter, dear ! Miss Martineau says of herself, 'I am the slowest of readers, sometimes a page an hour ; but then, what I read I make my own.' That is the only true way to read for improvement. Comte, one of the grandest intellects of Europe, was a slow reader, also ; Sir Erskine Perry once said of him, that what he read, 'fructified and came out' a living tree with leaves and fruit.' But tell me, how do you feel this afternoon, dear?"

"Quite well. And when we set sail for 'Merry England' there will be no more pain for me. It is

only an occasional uneasiness I suffer now. Papa loves me too much, and I can't somehow unwind his heart-strings from around my own. I wish we had gone last month."

"Why, darling? You speak earnestly."

"Because, I believe—I don't know why—Miss Electra, that the darkness will lift when we get there."

She spoke expressively, as she looked in Electra's face, and the young girl turned pale, her lips parted, but she could not speak. She had been living in the past all day, and she had scarcely brought herself to the present.

"How do you know? Who told you?" were the words on her lips, for it seemed as if Alice was referring to her own sorrow ; but she did not give them utterance.

"Don't turn so pale, my own friend," said the young girl, slipping her arm about her teacher's neck ; "the darkness once lifted, the light of the broad, eternal day will be mine, and then I will be happier."

"My darling !"

Electra held the slight form to her with a close, convulsive grasp. She felt it would be hard to give up the dearest friendship of her soul ; to know that all the grace, beauty, and angelic sweetness of "Clifton" would go down to the silent dust, when the angels redeemed her promise

"Not to stay."

But this, even *this*, was more bearable than the thought that conventionality would loom like an adamant

stratum between their loves, did she know what a cloud hung over her. Alas! a cloud she began to fear would never be lifted in life. But she breathed more freely when she found her secret remained yet inviolate within her own breast.

The reading-lesson in Macaulay over, and the other lessons disposed of, Electra dismissed school and went out in the sunshine, revelling in a broad-brimmed *sombrero*, with the luxury of a deep lace border. On from light into shadow, and she sank down under the boughs of a broad-spreading beech, and opened a little blue and gold bound volume of Tennyson's "PRINCESS" and "DAY DREAM."

Gradually the warm atmosphere and the natural languor of her nature—inherent love of luxury, I might call it—closed down her tired eyelids on her tired eyes. Through the slumberous hours of midday she lay there with the breath of the summer breeze kissing her, and the song of birds carolling over her, and the sunshine stole around the tree, and with lingering, loving touch laid a golden finger on Electra's pure brow.

One arm with careless grace was tossed above her head, and the other lay over her book, which had fallen from her white, pretty hand. Her pure muslin drapery floated around her in the most bewitching folds, and the saucy wind, that had been making love to the flowers all day, lifted the deep hem of her Swiss dress, and disclosed to view the most charming little foot imaginable.

The sound of a light footstep crackling amid the dry

leaves of the dead year, did not disturb the young girl's deep slumber, neither did the shadow which fell over her waken her; she only smiled as the glow of the sun was shut away, and a balmy coolness stole over her.

And who was it that bent thus above her?

A tall, pale gentleman, of perhaps forty years of age—his carriage self-possessed and elegant. Stooping, he lifted the heavy braids which lay on her flushed cheek, murmuring as he did so:

"O Love! I see thee glittering from afar,
Sweet airs and silvery lights encompass thee;
But, like the spice-groves and the evening star,
Far, far from me!"

A soft light smoothed out the hard, stern lines on the broad forehead; but only for a moment it did so, then the strange fold between the eyes deepened, and without looking at the beautiful girl again, he turned away and disappeared in the woods, muttering as he went:

"No, no; what have I to do with happiness! But—"

He walked on for some distance, and, as if struck by a sudden thought, he returned, and stooping over the sleeper picked up the little blue and gold volume; it opened at the place:

"And on her lover's arm she leant,
And 'round her waist she felt it fold,
And far across the hills she went
In that new world, which now is old;
Across the hills, and far away
Beyond their utmost purple rim,
And deep into the dying day,
The happy princess followed him!"

"And, by the god Baal, so shall my princess follow me!" exclaimed the stranger, darting into the nearest thicket, as he saw Electra stir and wake—in his haste bearing with him the fateful volume.

The herds were wending slowly homeward, the tinkling of their bells chiming softly on the evening air. The sun was fretting gold against the lace-work of the pine-trees, and twilight shook out the folds of her dusky mantle, while the pure white daylight went among the shadows into death.

Electra rose, looked about her with a dreamy, delicious air, and then suddenly waking to a memory of all her dark thoughts that day—of her sorrow, her loneliness—once more her soul went down in the Asphaltic waves of sorrow; and turning her face to the western sky, she stood like a sweet-browed saint—so calm, so fair, her hair just lifted by the evening breeze, no stain of earthliness upon her. Her lips parted gaspingly. The day had been so painful with its weight of memories! As she stood now, over the distance came the fragrance of Beechmoor blossoms, and the long deep shadows around the "Grange." Oh for one ride over the hills with her Cousin William! Oh for one tender word from Dr. Brandenburg's lips! And then—"Lynn—Lynn!" cried her stifling heart, and she put her hand over it to still the pain, whispering:

"What are we set on earth for? Say to toil;
Nor seek to leave thy tending of the vines,
For all the heat of day, till it declines,
And death's mild curfew shall from work assail.

God did anoint thee with His odorous oil,
To wrestle, not to reign. . . . So others shall
Take patience, labor to their heart and hand,
From thy hand and thy heart, and thy brave cheer,
And God's grace fructify through thee to all."



CHAPTER XVIII.

AUTUMN, drunken deep with the rich blood of the purple grape, reeled over the land. His breath blighted and blackened the tender flowers and the graceful vines. The cicada and the green-winged *Orthoptera* ceased their chirping, and a stillness as of awe rested over woods and meadow-land. The summer was dead.

And just at this season of the grand old year's *jubilatio*, Mrs. Baird, the aristocratic and conservative, arrived at Clifton to visit her friend "Effie," as she unceremoniously addressed high-spirited but warm-hearted Mrs. McDowell. The Lares and Penates of that beautiful home were surely sleeping at their posts when such warm welcome was extended to this Medea-souled queen of the *beau monde*. Not long after her arrival, with her brain and heart pulsing to the memory of her triumphs at Newport, Saratoga, Niagara, and Cape May, Mrs. McDowell crowned herself with a continued scowl when in her husband's presence; and he saw with prescient eyes that peace would never again fold her silvery wings at his domestic hearth unless he laid the "stone" elsewhere than at Clifton. So the long-cherished plan of returning to dear, happy England, the home of his heart, was once more brought forward as a proposition. The precarious condition

of his beloved child's health no longer precluded this idea, for she had been, he was confident, steadily improving since Miss Rutherford's arrival, and, more than all, daily Alice plead for the change with a long-ing earnestness impossible to resist. So the time of departure was settled upon as the 25th of October. Deft fingers were busy in preparation, and light footsteps fled hither and thither. Numerous drives were taken into B——, and mysterious commissions performed of which only the stylish mantua-maker, Mrs. Simpson, knew the exact purport.

One afternoon the family sat convened in the parlor, each one engaged upon some pleasant topic, save Mrs. Baird, who lazily lounged in a luxurious armchair, and played with the gorgeous-hued feathers of her large Indian fan. Soon a soft, sweet hush stole over all, a delicious silence, as if the earth lay

"Like a child that sleeps without a moan."

The long lines of golden light shone in through the gothic windows, shaded with amber-silken draperies. The perfume of rare flowers filled the air with a dense fragrance. The tinkle of a fountain playing its bright waters into sparkling spray alone broke the audible stillness. Electra sat beside Alice, guiding her occasionally in her painting.

"Oh! Miss Electra," cried the little lady at last, "you please just put the gold-dusted hearts in the pansies. I will spoil everything; and my purple is not half so pretty as yours."

Electra took up the brush as Alice's hand released it, remarking as she did so :

"You only need practice, darling, when you will know the art of *chiaro-oscuro* quite as prettily as I do."

Now if Electra possessed any dilettanteism it was for the palette, and it had been her passion from early childhood, when her cousin William supplied her with every article necessary to encourage her in *peinture*, and guided her hand just as she guided Alice's. And very soon the warm glow of enthusiasm lit up her face with a rare beauty. The old yet pretty simile of a light within an ancient vase suited her exactly. Could an artist have seen her then, with her soft, neutral-tinted dress ; her form strangely mingling the imperial with the voluptuous, which was now shaded with a deliciously languid grace ; her pure, proud face, with its close braids of rich brown hair, and the shapely fingers and slender wrist—he might have given to the world, out of such a subject, a picture extremely artistic and beautiful.

Mrs. Baird, with half-closed eyes, watched the young enthusiast for some moments, then starting from her reverie, exclaimed :

"Effie, I have found it—I have found it."

"Found what, Mary?" asked Mrs. McDowell, in a surprised tone.

"Why, found out who it is that Miss Rutherford resembles. Her face has afforded speculation for very many of my day-dreams since I have been at 'Clifton,' I can assure you."

"Oh ! you odd creature," said Mrs. McDowell, with a low, musical laugh ; "do tell us whom it is you know half as pretty as Miss Rutherford?"

"Well, Electra Dudley. Do you not remember, the first term that you went to Madame Moineau's, the beautiful girl from Kentucky who ran away with that dark, languid-looking, paladin-like Englishman, whom we all believed to be a lord or an earl in disguise? Can it be that you have forgotten him?"

"No ; I have a distinct recollection of him, and of her too. By the way, it seems to me that I have a faint remembrance of some ill-rumor concerning her."

Mrs. McDowell looked as if she would strongly like to recall that rumor, as she bent her fair cheek down on four taper fingers, whose whiteness might have put the lily-petals to blush.

"You ought to have a very vivid one ! She never married the man, and he finally deserted her."

"What was his name? I have forgotten it," said Mrs. McDowell, in an interested tone, which seemed to invite the confidence of Mrs. Baird.

"Claude Pemberton. I always thought it such a pretty name, and was foolish enough, after he had waltzed with me at one or two of our '*Soirees*,' to write Mary Pemberton all over my French exercise-book. All girls are prone to this folly in their *verdancy*, I believe," replied Mary Baird, with a light laugh and a pink flush on her cheek. "I was highly amused, not long since, over this same subject. Going from Baltimore to Columbus, I met Laura West, and we inad-

vertently chanced upon Electra Dudley. She was highly indignant at some of my remarks, and in her saucy, *sans souci* style gave me to understand none of us were better than what I called 'Electra'—a 'modern Pariah.' She drew quite a pretty parable between herself and the Saviour, and much more in the same strain. I was not equal—or capable, rather—of sustaining such a conversation, and she finally shied off. Not long afterward, a superb-looking man, whom I had been admiring all day, introduced himself to Laura, and told her Electra Dudley was his aunt, and that she had left a beautiful child who bore her mother's maiden name. And while tears coursed down his cheeks, he told of this young fledgeling going away from home *incognito*—and that for months he had been searching for her ineffectually—was doing so still. I could not keep *pari passu* with their conversation, try as I would. Laura is so everlastingly addicted to making sunshine and frostwork metaphors! At last she stepped off at some station; and I did not see him after she left. I felt really sorry for the man; he seemed to love his lost cousin with almost wild passion. Even I, a stranger, could tell it by infallible signs, the instant he mentioned her name, and no doubt the daughter is unworthy as *la belle mère*."

This all transpired in a much shorter space of time than it has taken to transcribe it here. The ladies, interested in each other, failed to observe the effect of their conversation upon the graceful young *artiste* at the window. At the first sound of her mother's name, the

warm blood had forsaken her lips, and ere the close of Mrs. Baird's speech it had stagnated round her heart. Silently, softly the brush slipped from her slender fingers, leaving a purple stain on her gray robe as it fell. Her head sank forward on the table—she was insensible.

Alice was the first to notice this, as she turned from the *verd antique* table, where she had been sorting piles of *pecanas* for Ernst and Valerie when they had finished their lessons.

"Heavens! Mamma! Mamma!" she exclaimed, excitedly, "Miss Rutherford has fainted!"

The ladies sprang forward, but only Mrs. McDowell assisted in recovering the poor girl's distraught senses, for Mrs. Baird, struck with a sudden thought as she rose, as quickly sank again into her luxurious chair. Alice rang the bell, and the servants ran in with salts, camphor, and aromatic vinegar. Electra was restored after a few moments' exertion, and with a murmured apology for the trouble and excitement she had caused, she glided from the room, supported by Mrs. McDowell's arm. After a few moments' absence the latter returned to the parlor.

"Well, how is your *protégée*?" asked Mrs. Baird, in an indifferent tone.

"Better, much better," simply replied Mrs. McDowell. "She says she has been suffering with nervous headache all this morning."

Mrs. Baird laughed a clear, ringing laugh, very disagreeable to hear even when one's nerves are not un-

strung, and trebly so when they are : and yet it was sweet and musical.

"Effie McDowell!"

Like the velvet touch of the panther, the beautiful hand of Mary Baird rested on that of her friend, and leaning forward, she murmured a word or two into the pink-tinted ear bent toward her pretty lips.

"Impossible! perfectly impossible!" exclaimed Mrs. McDowell, a little excitedly.

"Believe it or not, as you choose! But, I tell you, such *remarkable* resemblance can only exist between those bound by ties of consanguinity, and just so surely as you and I sit here together, that girl is the child of *Electra Dudley!*"

"Oh, my dear Mary, you are assuredly dreaming! This girl's name is Rutherford, and—"

"And anything else she may choose to *call* herself! I flatter myself that I know a thing or two, Effie. And the knowledge of this fact is none the less substantiative because it is intuitive. I have studied that girl's face since I have been at Clifton; studied it closely, persistently; and I tell you she is the child of Electra Dudley; and more"—here she lowered her voice soft, as if she were about to say "*Gabriel*"—"she is no better than her mother."

Mrs. McDowell sprang away from her with an absolutely shocked expression upon her handsome face.

"Mary Baird, what is the matter with you this afternoon? You are dreaming! What has there ever been

reprehensible in the conduct of this girl that you have seen?"

"Ugh! umph! um—m—m!"

This was all that Mrs. Baird said for full five minutes. But who is there, in this broad world, tormented with a half-told story or a jealous scandal, who has not accepted such signs, such murmurs, as proofs "strong as holy writ?"

"I am far from being one of those disagreeable characters who attempt to connive at such errors as I consider dangerous to the peace of mind of those I love. Still less am I one to interfere in matters which concern me not; but in this case, Effie, I have loved you too long—I have loved you too dearly—"

Here she placed her hand on that of Mrs. McDowell, strangely soothing away the clonic spasms which had been contorting its graceful outline, and subduing her with the resolute, steely look in her calm eyes.

"Of course it is in reality no affair of mine; but before I continue, Effie, let me ask you—are you jealously inclined?"

It was a poisoned dagger to thrust into that queenly woman's heart, conscious of her own power and her superb beauty, and the pain it gave sent the blood purpling to her very temples, and she bit her lip until the prints of her teeth remained on it for hours, in visual attestation of her grand self-control. It was a wifely answer she gave, and Effie McDowell never looked so radiant as when she said it; nor did she

speak until the dark look had passed and calm grace sat regnant upon her proud brow.

"Not one word of my husband, Mary, if that is what you mean. I have no inclination, even were it right, to listen to you. I put my life in the hands of Aubin McDowell, and he has proven well worthy of the trust. I have lived with him for ten years or more; I am the mother of his children, and I candidly tell you I would sooner doubt the supremacy of the most high God than lose my faith in my noble husband. He is now, as he must ever be, brother, father, mother, lover, husband. *Tout à moi!*"

Her energy amounted almost to passion, and absolutely struck the admiration of Mary Baird's adamant heart.

"Why, child," she said, with a sneering little laugh, "you would be *grande* in a *tragedy*! Ristori and Rachel in their greatest *rôles*, could not equal that air. Thespis himself would stand *petrified* into admiration! Believe me, I had no idea of abusing 'mine host.' The old Arabian custom of never criticising those who 'sit under your mahogany,' is exactly reversed in my case, and I never vilify any one under whose 'mahogany' I sit."

Here she paused.

"I am glad of it, Mary; and if I seemed harsh or hasty in my speech, let the honest emotion which prompted the outbreak plead my excuse."

Mrs. McDowell bent and pressed a light kiss upon Mary Baird's forehead, gleaming

"Like a blue-veined cameo
Set in wrought Etruscan frame."

"*'Chacun à son goût,'* is a trite but good adage, Effie. I try to abide by it always; though speaking earnestly, I do not really think, if I were you, that I would retain this person as a guide and associate for a dear, guileless girl like Alice."

"I have yet to see the first act not entitling her to that position," replied Mrs. McDowell: "if you can, give me any just reason?"

"Would not the fact that she is a parentless waif influence you?"

Mrs. Baird leaned eagerly forward.

"No, I think not," said Mrs. McDowell, with a flush stealing over her cheek. "If she is high and noble, and pure, even though poor Electra strayed, I would not be the first to brand her child with shame, and cast her from the fold."

She spoke very positively now, for an inward conviction, like an angel of truth speaking from her heart, strengthened her to endure either jeer or sarcasm in the cause of the innocent undefiled.

"And nothing but actual visual knowledge of her unworthiness would convince you she ought not to stay?"

"Nothing else, and even this much shall not be won by *espionage*!"

"I do not propose that it shall be so gained. Face her with her birth, and then watch. *Væ Victis.*"

The last words came with a hiss through Mrs. Baird's

even rows of pearly teeth, and, while Effie McDowell still shrank from the sound, she rose and passed out of the room, with the easy, undulating grace of a serpent. Gliding along the hall out into the light of the setting sun, she murmured, while she clutched at the *cerile* rosary hid beneath the ample folds of her dress: "I owe it—if not to society—at least to the past." And she grated her teeth hard.

She did not pause at the foot of the last terrace, but turned to the left, walking on to the very place beneath the beechen boughs, now hanging out their flame-colored banners, embroidered with green, where Electra had slumbered in the sunshine months before.

Arriving at this spot, she sat down on the velvety sward, and, as if expecting some one, now and then quickly turned her head, as if listening for a footstep, which came not. The sun was sinking below the hills, before a crackling of the underbrush in the thicket near by told her her watch was ended. She rose to her feet with a bound, just as the same tall stranger who had watched above Electra, and accidentally purloined her "PRINCESS," stood before her.

He caught her hands in his own, exclaiming:

"Oh, Mary! I have so longed for this hour!"

His look was eager, but the pale gleam of a far-off star could not have been calmer than her patrician features.

"Why did you not come earlier? I have waited for you fully two hours, if not more. I thought, Victor, you could keep a tryst better than this."

"Do not reproach me, Mary. God knows I've been sick for days and weeks for the sight of your sweet face."

She only pouted her pretty lips, and looked a degree colder.

"That is no apology for this delay."

"Well, the fact is, Mary, I only arrived in B—— by the afternoon train, and it took some time to ride here."

"You should have arrived in B—— yesterday."

"I know it, darling, but Pemberton detained me in Augusta longer than I intended or expected."

"You have seen him, then?"

Her voice was quick, eager, passionate, and a cold gleam lit up her eyes, like the blue flash of steel in the sunlight.

"Yes, and terribly changed he is, too, by the by. Not many months ago, the physicians believed him to be dying, and indeed he was so far gone, that Lynn Evesham was summoned to the 'Hall,' to take possession immediately upon his demise; but he out-witted everybody—recovered—set sail for America, and is now roaming hither and thither over the country with the insane belief that he will find the very girl at yonder house."

"I had hoped he had out-grown all that!" Mrs. Baird responded, in an annoyed tone.

"Out-grown it? Could you see him ten minutes you would be quickly convinced to the contrary. His constant theme is—his child."

"He must never find her."

The words dropped from the woman's lips as if she

weighed well a curse on each modulated sound, and the hand she rested on his arm clinched it with the painful grip of a vice.

"He must never find her!" she repeated again—"mark that, Victor Hardinge!"

"Why, never, Mary?"

"Because I will it so!" she said, with the imperial air of an empress.

He saw she was terribly in earnest, and a quick thought flashed through his brain. At last he held the sceptre of power in his own hands.

"Mary," he said, veiling his sudden triumph beneath a glance of despair, "you love this man!"

She turned from him, pacing to and fro upon the sward like a chafed tigress in the limit of a cage. Then suddenly changing her mood, and melting her voice down to the most exquisitely modulated tone of sweetness, she paused, and rested her hand on his swarthy cheek for an instant, and then withdrawing it, said, with a light laugh:

"Not so, Victor; for you is reserved that greatest honor—possession of my heart."

At the touch of her fingers, Victor Hardinge shivered from head to heel, as though, Medea-gifted, she had scorched his flesh to the bone, and his breath was fevered as it stirred the shining hair upon her forehead when he bent down toward her.

"Then, Mary, why torture me with these consuming doubts? Why starve me into famine with smiles and sighs?"

For one instant she yielded herself to the heat of his passionate embrace, then warily gliding from him, she said pitifully:

"Victor, do not urge me too far; do not press me *à la mort!* I owe something to *society*. You must remember this. It is a fact you seem constantly attempting to ignore!"

"Why not ignore it? Why shall we not go to Florence—beautiful Florence—"

"Beside Arno's wave?"

Beneath the blue sky ever hovering over her, we could reign in an atmosphere of unfading joy!"

She paused a moment before her reply; then, standing on tiptoe, whispered in his ear:

"Mary! Mary! Can it be? Joy! What is there I would not risk—dare do? Command me. My allegiance is yours, life and limb!"

A wild light shone in his eyes, while the warm blood surging upward stained the swart pallor of his cheek with crimson.

"Then," she said, sinking gracefully upon the sward and leaning back against the gnarled tree-trunk, "sit here beside me and tell me how you discovered her retreat so soon."

"That is quickly explained. When you placed the picture of Electra Dudley in my hands and bade me find her child before you would see me again, I went to N——. Traced her from thence to Kentucky. There my search ended for some time. Well, one night when

we were passing trains at — Station, somewhere in Ohio, just as we were rolling away I heard the wild cry of 'Electra! Electra!' I put my head out of the window, and saw arms outstretched toward me, or rather the person in front of me, a lady. My curiosity and interest, of course, were aroused. Changing my place, I stationed myself opposite her—one seat removed—and consulting my picture, found the resemblance undeniable. I followed her to B—, and not long afterward I discovered her place of residence, just here, where she had sunk down to rest and gone to sleep, little dreaming of the visage bending over her in her girlish beauty. I—"

"Go on."

Mrs. Baird looked eagerly in his face.

"She had been reading Tennyson's 'PRINCESS,' and I took the book off by accident. I brought it to-day for you to return to her, without any information, save that you found it under the beech-tree at the end of the park."

Mrs. Baird took the fateful little volume of blue and gold, and, while she whirled the pearly-tinted leaves over and over again with the tips of her fingers, she fell into a deep reverie.

Victor Hardinge put out his hand and rested it lightly on her shining hair. She only bent her head to the caress, without otherwise appearing to notice his presence. At last, looking up with that blue blaze in her eyes, as if ready to do battle with the world, she said in a resolute voice:

"This book must be *the* corner-stone of our plot. It must be returned anonymously to the girl; and, Victor, we must get her away from Clifton."

"Mary," he said, in a half-regretful tone, "if this girl is happy and guileless—as she is—wherefore disturb her peace? She is very pretty—very innocent."

"You resign your prize, then? You are weary of the chase? You decline to pay the price of possession?"

Her voice rang out its clear metallic sound, like a "silver clarion," and her face lost every vestige of color as she bent it close to the upturned one of Victor Hardinge.

"Resign?—weary?—decline?" he exclaimed; "never, never!"

"Then come, and I will unfold my plans to you."

With measured steps they paced the length of the sward. The darkness of a starless night, or rather a dusky twilight, fell around them, ere they separated; then it was with a quick embrace and a passionate kiss. The man dived into the gloom of the thicket, and Mary Baird with fleet steps hastened to the last terrace, where Mr. and Mrs. McDowell found her a few moments later.

"Why Mary dear, you really alarmed us!" exclaimed Effie.

"How, cherie?" asked Mrs. Baird, in a dreamy, half-wearied tone.

"Why, by staying out so late, to be sure! Here Aubin and I have been roaming around in search of you for the last half-hour. Where have you been?"

"Just here," said Mrs. Baird, in the coolest imaginable tones, all the while thanking her "lucky star" for being in the ascendant. "I was so touched with the beauty of the evening that I have lingered beyond a prudent hour.

"An eve intensely beautiful—an eve
Calm as the slumber of a lovely girl
Dreaming of hope. The rich autumnal woods,
With their innumerable shades and colorings.
Or, like a silent instrument, at rest;
A silent instrument—whereon the wind
Hath long forgot to play."

"Well, Mary, don't get poetical at the expense of your health. Come, let us go in; the dew is falling, and I have the most intense aversion to damp feet and draggled skirts," replied Mrs. McDowell, with a shrug of her graceful shoulders.

At the door the servant met them with the announcement that tea was ready, and the circumstance of Mrs. Baird's long soliloquy on the terrace seemed wholly forgotten. But a close observer would have seen that while she wore an unusually thoughtful shadow upon her brow, she spoke quickly, excitedly, and that the exquisite languor generally accompanying her slightest movement, had entirely disappeared.

Had Rodman Baird, in his Northern home, or in his dismal counting-house, half dreamed of the plottings of his pretty *châtelaine*, it is barely possible he would have laid his head on a rougher pillow, and slept less sweetly than he did. As it was, the veil of

mystery which ever shrouds the future shut out from his eager gray eyes the shadows that lay across the golden wings of Hope, as she flashed down the vistas of Eternity—lost—lost—lost!

Mary Baird whispered, as she closed her eyes that night, one word, and the hissing demons of Tophet gibbered it one to another through the echoing distance from earth—"Revenge!"



CHAPTER XIX.

FIVE days after the occurrence which caused such a terrible convulsion to Electra, and while she still wavered as to the propriety of a confession of her real position in society, Mrs. McDowell, with an angry flush upon her brow, stepped quickly along the hall, and pausing before the "smoking-room," rapped lightly on the door. Without waiting for an invitation to enter, she did so.

"Aubin, are you too much engaged to talk seriously for five minutes?" Her tone was sharp—imperative. From wreaths of smoke he raised his handsome head, and with a smile replied:

"If *la belle des belles* comes to my 'den' void of asperity this morning, I will be more than charmed to 'talk seriously' fifty times five minutes. But—"

Here he drew a deep sigh, and contracted his brow with a portentous frown, and, with a fondness entirely at variance with his expression, held out his hand.

Advancing, she bent to imprint a kiss upon his lips, and then placing a little blue and gold bound volume—the fateful "PRINCESS"—in his hand with a note, she said:

"I want you to read this note and then tell me what you think of it all."

Mr. McDowell looked a little surprised.

"From whom is it?" he asked.

"Read and see," she simply replied.

He laid aside his meerschaum and read with a gathering cloud of doubt and indignation upon his brow:

"B——, 18—,

"Mrs. McDowell will find, with the accompanying note, a volume of Tennyson's 'PRINCESS,' belonging to her governess, Miss Rutherford. She will please return it, with H. V.'s compliments, to Miss Rutherford, with the information that he *cannot* fulfil his promised tryst because of circumstances now unexplainable.

"Yours, etc., H. V."

"This is a libel against that girl, Effie, and the man who wrote it is an unmitigated scoundrel, whatever he may appear to be in the eyes of the world, and the way to treat it is with silent contempt. Miss Rutherford is not a person to either propose or keep trysts with any one. Of this I am confident," said Mr. McDowell.

"Let that be as it may," replied his wife. "So far, so good. Now, what do you think of this?"

She laid another note before him. It was Electra's chirography—that was undeniable; and it ran:

"Clifton, 18—.

"I will keep the tryst. Expect me at sunset, under the beech-tree.

"Respectfully,

"ELECTRA RUTHERFORD."

"Zounds!" exclaimed Mr. McDowell, and then as suddenly sank into silence.

Five minutes passed.

"Well?" inquired his wife, impatiently.

"We will watch the tryst and then write—"

"What?—for I have *already* watched," said Effie, eagerly.

"A check on the B—— Bank for her wages, and dismiss her," replied her husband, in a stern, cold voice.

Effie's eyes sparkled. Why, she would hardly have been able to tell, if she had been questioned. She only felt that once dismissed by her husband, it would be incontestable proof to Mrs. Baird that he had no thought of disloyalty to her, in any admiration he may have evinced for Electra.

It was a very womanly but ungenerous emotion; and her eyes flashed in anticipation of her moral triumph over her suspecting friend.

Her husband, looking down on her, saw the varying color on her cheek, and with a gathering frown upon his brow, asked:

"Effie, are you glad of this unfortunate occurrence? Can it be that *my wife* is so stained with the moral leprosy of our modern women, that she triumphs in the downfall of an erring sister? As if—"

Here he excitedly threw off the hand she had lightly rested upon his arm—

"As if it laid a laurel-leaf upon your heart or your brow, because some weak, erring creature has strayed

from the 'straight and narrow road!' My God! how horrible it is to see the inhumanity extant among you! You have no sympathy for each others' sorrows. There is no tender impulse of Christianity among you!"

"Aubin!" Effie's trembling voice rose scarcely above a whisper, and she was extremely pale; but he noticed her not.

"Men are condemned, time over time, for cruelty and harshness to women; but I dare aver, without one thought of contradiction or a shadow of equivocation, that the roughest of us would handle her more tenderly, and shield and protect her better, than she would fare were she to fall in the hands of one of her own sex. Why, you tear each other to pieces like cormorants!"

Effie could no longer brook his impatience. Truth was, Aubin McDowell's nature possessed an impulsiveness which created—or if it did not, at least brought into action—a kindred emotion in the breast of a congenial friend or associate. Therefore, Effie felt her temper rising rapidly to "white heat," and found herself incapable of cooling or subduing it.

Throwing herself into an armchair—for he had risen, and, as is the general habit of angry men, was pacing the floor with long, emphatic strides, as if he would set his foot on the neck of nations—she said with a most unwomanly sneer curling her pretty lip:

"It depends entirely upon how and where a person is reared. You are an Englishman, consequently have 'passed muster' in half a dozen 'platonic affections'

with *les belles dames sans merci, et avec amour*. I am only an unsophisticated, simple Georgian, who has not yet learned—and very possibly never will—the propriety of taking the leper to my arms, when my own self-preservation demands that I should exclaim ‘unclean;’ especially too, when your darling Alice is in danger from such companionship. No, Mr. McDowell, not even your leonine front can press me to such a tottering wall.”

It is almost impossible to describe Aubin McDowell’s reception of his wife’s *brusquerie*. His impatience disappeared, but the unswerving calm which he assumed told so much of the wonderful self-control he was exerting, that it excited Effie’s admiration even in her anger, and she thought :

“What a grand husband I have, and how good he is to me ! I am wrong to thus tempt him to be harsh or stern.”

With her, thought was almost action—she was generally so impulsive. Therefore, even while the cold disapproval in his eyes, the compressed lips, the white cheek, and, above all, the fierce strokes he bestowed upon his petted moustache, betokened his keen, his bitter displeasure, she was ready to plead for forgiveness. She knew that he was too much of a gentleman to be rude to her, whatever her provocation.

“Aubin,” she said, softly, “I am hot-blooded, but not cruel ; I am passionate, but not vindictive. If I err, I am not stubborn, but rather proud to confess my misdeed, especially if my confessor be the man I

love ; and, Aubin, I tell you I know I was wrong just now, and I am exceedingly sorry. Will you forgive me ?”

She rose from her chair and stood before him, a red flush on her cheek ; for never in all her married life had Effie spoken such humble words. Aubin McDowell’s displeasure vanished in intense surprise ; then a keen joy flashed over his face—a joy that had something unspeakable in it. Rising quickly, he held out his arms, and with a murmur, “My Effie, my passionate but beloved wife !” he clasped her close to his heart.

“An unnatural scene,” methinks I hear some reader exclaim. If so, I am more than half confident that reader is single, for I dare aver there are few married persons who have not “passed the Rubicon” in just such *tête-à-têtes* with their “better halves.”

What so entrancing as a woman—especially a pretty one—pleading pardon from the lips of her liege lord ? What so easy for a woman to speak to the man she loves ? And yet, alas ! if such episodes must transpire, how seldom repented !

The cloud passed, and—Effie seated on her husband’s knee—the remote subject of their dispute was again brought into discussion.

It has been prettily and truly said :

“A pebble in the streamlet scant,
Hath turned the course of many a river,
A dew-drop on the baby plant
Has warped the giant oak forever.”

And it may be, Mr. McDowell would have been more inclined to look leniently upon Electra's reported misdemeanor, but for the little misunderstanding and affectionate repentance during that connubial interview.

"Miss Rutherford, I would be obliged to you for a few moments in my study."

Electra looked up in surprise at the stern, cold face and handsome form framed in the doorway. "What in the world can be the matter?" she thought, for Aubin McDowell since her arrival at Clifton had never before intruded within the boundary of the school-room; but she smothered her curiosity beneath a calm promptitude, and replying, "Certainly sir," she silently followed him along the hall, and passed into the study. Here he closed the door, and with a courtly air invited her to be seated. She obeyed, with an expanded gaze wholly betraying her astonishment at such unusual proceedings. This done, he drew another chair toward a table, and sitting down folded his arms in a very business-like attitude, while his eyes studied the intaglios upon a red onyx cigar-stand, in lieu of that pale, sweet face with its large, sad eyes looking into his own. At last he spoke: "My remarks will be few, and none of them absonant. I suppose, to be understood, I had better dash *in medias res*—to quote a Latin phrase. You teach Latin, I believe, Miss Rutherford?"

"To the best of my ability," answered Electra, sim-

ply. "And if I may be allowed a voice in the matter, I would prefer that you should speak plainly."

"As you will," he said, with a little nervous shrug. "Yet understand, Miss Rutherford, before I proceed, I do not wish you to consider me as presumptuous in any inquiry or remark I may advance during the continuance of this conversation."

Electra bowed haughtily, detecting an increased coldness in his manner.

"You are an orphan?"

"Yes, sir—an orphan," she replied, flushing and paling alternately.

"May I inquire if you were residing with a relative when I engaged your services as governess?"

"I was not, sir."

"A guardian, perhaps?"

"Yes, sir."

"Again—was he married or single?"

"The latter, sir."

"Young or old?"

"Young, sir, and strikingly handsome," replied Electra, with fast rising impatience at such minute inquiries.

"Once more: by whom was he elected your guardian? Which parent, I mean?"

"Why, Mr. McDowell, I cannot comprehend how such matters as the foregoing can affect or interest you. You forget that to set a watch all that is required is, to move the minute-hand—not to take the work to pieces."

The young girl's brow was flushed with excitement.

"Pardon, Madam, but these matters are of importance, and your replies will decidedly affect our future relations toward each other."

Electra looked surprised, and answered, after a moment's pause, in a trembling voice :

"My sainted mother constituted Dr. Brandenburg my guardian and friend."

Her manner was so earnest, her tone so eloquent with emotion, that Aubin McDowell was posed for an instant how to proceed. But the thought of Alice nerved him. Drawing the blue and gold volume from his vest-pocket, he placed it upon the table, and at the same moment displayed the note signed H. V. to view.

"I suppose you recognize your property?" he said coolly.

Electra reached out her hand and caught the book, exclaiming joyously :

"Recognize it? Of course I do! It has been lost for weeks. I could not remember where I mislaid it at first, but finally the thought came to me that I left it at the beech-tree at the end of the park, but when I went in search of it, it was not there, and I gave it up as lost. May I ask where you found it, sir?"

"Such cool effrontery I never before beheld, and such a pure, holy face, too!"

This was what Aubin McDowell thought in his heart, but he replied, with cold urbanity :

"It was sent to my wife with a note from some one

signing himself 'H. V.' Perhaps you know who he is? My wife and I are in ignorance."

Electra's cheek had grown painfully pallid to look upon, and her eyes studied his face anxiously.

"The writer sends a message to you, to wit : He cannot keep his tryst with you, under the beech-tree, at the end of the park."

"My God!" exclaimed Electra, in deep agitation, forgetful of time, place, and circumstances. Mr. McDowell frowned ominously.

"Can it be possible, Miss Rutherford, that you know this person?" he asked, in a deep voice.

Now that is a rare quality which enables a woman to sustain herself upon the consciousness of rectitude, when it is evident that she has lost the respect of those around her; but this quality belonged to Electra Rutherford. Regaining her composure, she replied :

"I do, sir."

"And then you did write this?" exposing, as he spoke, her agreement to keep the tryst.

The color flushed hotly to Electra's face, and as suddenly receded, leaving her pale as before.

"I did, sir."

Her manner was firm, her tone positive. Mr. McDowell rose to his feet with a bound, and paced to and fro, apparently allaying his excitement before he would permit himself to speak again. At last resuming his seat, he addressed her :

"Miss Rutherford, this mystery must be dissipated. You must not only inform me who is your incognito

friend, but wherefore you kept a tryst under the beech-tree in the park, in lieu of a proper reception of that person in the Clifton parlor."

He paused ; but Electra, who had arisen from her chair in turn, and stood haughtily but respectfully before him, replied never a word. He continued :

"This explanation must occur, else—"

"What, sir?"

Electra fastened her dark eyes upon his stern face.

"Else your guardianship over my beloved children, as a companion and governess, ceases with this interview."

Electra never wavered in her instantaneous reply :

"Then, sir, it must cease. Circumstances over which I have no control, prevent me from explaining to you what, in simple justice to our relative positions, you have a right to know. I regret this as much, if not more, than you can possibly do. I am innocent of wrong or imprudence ; but, as I said before, I cannot explain, and the consequence I am powerless to avert."

Tears were in her eyes now, and Aubin McDowell forebore to question her. He simply said, in a clear, cold tone, which sounded to Electra like a death-knell :

"Far be it from me, Miss Rutherford, to force your confidence. I regret that I have not funds here to pay you, but this 'check' will answer the same ; and I must request you to exchange no word with my children, *especially Alice*, before your departure. I prefer

that the acquaintance should terminate now and forever. I will order the carriage to be at your service immediately. Our interview has terminated."

Courtly as he had held open the door for her entrance, so he opened it now for her departure.

Electra bowed her head with the grand air of an injured queen, and was passing from the room when Mr. McDowell interrupted her :

"You have left your check upon the table."

The girl turned with the quickness of some wild thing at bay : the lava-tide of passion swept everything before it, like the pent-up floods through a Mississippi crevasse, and catching the check up she tore it into bits, and then, with rapid, trembling hand, she bore them to her lips, and from thence blew them into flakes over the floor.

"You cannot add further insult to injury," she said, bitterly. "The measure is full to the brim."

And then she swept past him, and he closed the door after her with that powerful self-control which would never permit him to grow angry with a woman. Truly has Crabbe written of adversity :

"In this wild world the fondest and the best
Are the most tried, most troubled and distressed."

It is the universal doom that tribulations shall assail us at every step that we take through the world. Some are slight—others are wearing as Sinbad's burden. None were created to live a life of unbroken calm, perfect pleasure, and unalloyed happiness—else we

learned to call earth heaven. Electra Rutherford had been subjected to more reverses of fortune and disappointments than generally fall into one human life. But in her sorrow she knew where to find strength, and patience, and faith. She remembered "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ—that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might become rich," and she was comforted.

It took but a few moments for her to prepare for departure, and she was ready some time before the carriage in waiting was announced to her.

Turning, she took a last, lingering look around the room where she had passed so many peaceful, hopeful hours. It seemed as if her heart must break with its weight of woe.

Passing along the hall, the young governess encountered Alice, who had evidently been weeping bitterly. The sweet girl ran toward her, and, throwing her arms about her neck, exclaimed, while she kissed her with passionate fervor :

"Electra, my darling Electra, my sister, my guardian angel, my one heart-friend, I *will* tell you 'good-bye'—*will* assure you of my undying devotion. They tell me you are unworthy ; but oh ! my darling, I do not believe it. I have an abiding faith in your purity and goodness ! God bless you ! God forever bless you ; and oh ! even though they separate us here, we will meet in heaven. Do not droop in despair ! Your earthly lot may be shadowed with pain and sorrow and care ; your brightest dreams may fade, and your earth-

ly friends prove false, but oh, Electra, God will always love you !—and so will little Allie !"

Electra kissed the pale, sweet face repeatedly, and tears, hot, scalding tears, fell upon it, while she murmured, in painful emotion :

"My darling, my pet, my Allie, I am innocent. I wish I could tell you all, but I cannot—I cannot."

Literally tearing herself from her embrace, the agitated girl stepped rapidly along the hall and out upon the portico. Upon the steps she met Mrs. Baird just returning from a promenade upon the terraces. Electra drew her veil closer over her tear-stained face, and silently passed her.

Thus she bade farewell to Clifton, the beautiful Southern home, which she had entered so joyously, with such bright dreams of success, and perhaps contentment—the hope of happiness had passed away with Lynn Evesham's marriage morn.

Alice stood at the window, watching the carriage as it slowly receded from view, and the great melancholy tears rolled over her pale cheeks.

"Ah, Papa !" she sobbed, "take me away—anywhere. Only *not here*. Ah ! Papa, Papa, you have broken your little Allie's heart !" and she fainted in her father's arms.

"Effie," he asked, in mad agitation, "had we better summon Electra back ?"

The wife looked bewildered ; but Mrs. Baird, in firm, clear tones replied :

"No, sir ; she will recover from this. It is only a

shock to her nerves, to learn of human wickedness in one she loves."

And they—alas! they believed her.

The trees were hanging out their flame-colored banners; the maple, and elm, and ilex were showering their crimson and gold, and flecked, and bronzed, and browned leaves over the grave of the dead summer; the light-breathed winds were flying hither and thither, the cows browsed up to their knees in ruby-crowned clover, and the rich fields waved their golden harvests to the ring of the mower's scythe. Electra pressed her wan, haggard face against the silken carriage-lining, and with weary gaze looked abroad upon the lessening views that would never gladden her eyes again.

"Farewell!"—she had said it to everything she loved. Now, hope was dead, and the ruined splendor of her dreams would never rise into brightness and beauty again. "Doomed—doomed!" rang upon the haunted air of memory. Ah!—

—"We should beware, lest we
Should arraigned as murderers be
Who have judged men hastily!"



CHAPTER XX.



WANDERER!"

Electra stood in the sunlight before the Planter's Hotel, in B., and murmured over the words to herself, with an intensity of bitterness better imagined than described.

Ordering the driver to deliver her baggage at the office, she turned hastily, and walked down the street.

Now this walk was apparently objectless; but it was beneficial, in fact, in at least two respects—it calmed her, and it made her think, not of the rude thrusting forth into the world without a single premonition of evil, but of her future, and what it held for her of fruition and sorrow. She possessed a peculiarly cheerful disposition; she always looked on life's bright side; she felt it to be the one on which God's smile shone, and that she would not better her condition by yielding to despair. Her trials gave tone and firmness to her character—fortitude, courage, strength, to her life. And she took the words of the Iron Duke into her heart with the same faith that she read her Bible. "Never neglect your duty; look on the bright side; live down prejudice." And this she resolved to do, confident that for her, God held a goal *somewhere!*

"Sleeping, we dream that life is beauty;
Waking, we find that life is duty."

But few, ah! few indeed, as courageously front a dark, cheerless future, as did this young girl who had never felt a mother's kiss upon her pure brow—never heard the low music of a mother's blessing. Walking on, she murmured softly:

"I cannot blame Mr. McDowell so much, after all; but oh! Dr. Brandenburg, had it been to *you*, instead, to whom I had said, 'I am innocent—appearances are against me, but I am powerless to explain them away,' would *you* not have had faith in me? Ay, ay, though the heavens fell, and the earth passed away! You would have believed in and loved me still! Oh, love! thoughtful, vigilant, watchful, earnest, patient—enduring, suffering, believing, hoping all things. Oh love, eternal, incomprehensible, indestructible, to what art thou comparable, save God's love? How shall thy happy possessor repay thee? how compass thy blessing and delight! Oh! sainted mother! whose purity I worship, from whose cold ashes Phoenix-like, thou shalt rise with gold and purple wings, and the sign and seal of royalty upon thy holy brow, *call* me hence to thee! And if I may not yet rest in my narrow, green-roofed house, strengthen me, oh, my mother! For thee—for thee have I dedicated my life, my soul to sorrow; for thee have I suffered—for thee am I a wanderer. Throw around me now thy protecting care, for I am friendless, desolate, alone!"

Suddenly she paused. She stood in front of a variety-store. A thought struck her—a thought, a feeling which prompted her at first to go to 'Clifton'—legiti-

mate and remunerative employment at her hand, she would be wrong to pass it. In a variety-store? Could she not obtain more intellectual and pleasant duty? How? Was her mind less trammelled as a teacher than it would be as a saleswoman?" Poor Electra! she had learned so soon that

"Golden wires may annoy as much as steel bars,
If they keep us behind prison windows."

It seemed almost laughable, that she, a parentless waif, should, for an instant, presume to question the respectability of being counter-girl in a variety-store! The idea was simply preposterous. One thing she readily recognized—the abject condition of that person who drifts about without anchor on life's restless sea, and without any settled principle and purpose up to which to live. She practically remembered, too, that she had only ten dollars in the world, and that ten dollars would literally take her "nowhere." Surely, she might advertise as governess, but upon what would she subsist while she waited for her advertisement to be answered? She could take boarding, but what would she have with which to pay the bill when due, if that reply was long delayed? what on which to perform the journey, the situation obtained? Taking these things into consideration, Electra hesitated no longer.

A polite clerk met her at the door with a suave bow and a set smile, displaying two rows of brilliant teeth.

"Can I serve you, Madam? Will you not walk in and view our new stock of goods?—just from New Orleans, emporium of Parisian fashions in this Cis-Atlantic

world? Beautiful goods! Prodigious low prices! We sell far below what we gave; but anything for custom. Laces, ribbons, Alexandre gloves, mantles, silks, trimmings, *mouchoirs*, fine as cobwebs—and at a *great* inducement to customers; as I said before, we sell them at *prodigiously low prices!* In what way can I serve you, Madam?"

Electra had listened to the rapid jargon of his verbal advertisement, which was meaningless to her, and with a sigh replied:

"You will oblige me by introducing me to the head of the 'House.'"

"Certainly, Madam. With the greatest pleasure."

She followed his footsteps through the store under a battery of inquisitive eyes of clerks, saleswomen, and the throng of customers. At last he paused before a glass-door, draped upon the inner side with rose-colored silk, and gave a gentle tap with his pencil, as if fearful of disturbing the occupant of the apartment.

"Entrez," replied a voice from within, its intonations laughably mingling the nasal vernacular twang of New England with the silvery accent of *la Française*.

With a profound flourish and a deep bow—an absolute *salaam*—he entered, and murmured: "Madame Duboistè—a visitor," and then retired.

Electra, at the sound of that lady's voice, trembled for her success, for the very intonation betokened a stern, hard, irascible task-mistress. Putting a "bold front" forward, however, she entered. Madame Duboistè addressed her:

"Bon jour, Mademoiselle."

"Good-day, Madame," replied Electra, in her sweet, simple way.

"Parlez-moi Français," said the Madame, showing a double row of fine teeth, in a graceful attempt to laugh silently, at the same time rising on her elbow and fastening a questioning gaze on the young girl's pale face, while she smoothed her waving hair distilling, like that of Amasia, the perfumes of myrrh and roses.

"You wish see me? Pourquoi?"

"I am in search of a situation," said Electra.

"Me no hab it," replied the Madame, concisely.

Electra sat down, and with a gesture of despair dropped her hands listlessly upon her lap.

"Vous avez le mal de cœur?" asked the Madame, sympathetically.

"Ay, I am sick at heart. I—"

Electra could say no more. Tears choked her utterance. Gradually a look almost of tenderness settled on the elder woman's face. Putting out her hand, she said softly:

"Ma pauvre fille! Que voulez-vous?"

"A situation, to enable me to live."

"You no hab way to live? You look for de friends in de monde?"

"Yes, I could conquer all difficulties, if I had but one true friend."

The Madame turned and paced to and fro, and Electra heard her murmuring softly, but could not distinguish the words; but the next moment she was shocked

into speechlessness, when she paused in front of her and said, in genuine American dialect :

"You have sinned, and seek a refuge. This is not the House of Refuge ! I am sorry for you, but I cannot give you a situation ; my position will not allow me to do so. Mammon and philanthropy are sworn enemies. I have done."

Electra caught her hand.

"Madam, you err. I am an orphan seeking a situation, by means of which I can gain an honest livelihood. I am confident I will give you satisfaction—if you will only try me."

She spoke with such solemn earnestness that she could not be doubted. Madame Duboistè was not a hard-hearted woman ; albeit she had a memory of past struggles of her own, hidden away down in her heart ; but be this as it may, she reseated herself, dropped her forehead forward on her white, bony hand, and for many moments remained silent. Then suddenly rising, she advanced to Electra, and touching her on the shoulder, said, in tones not wholly free from agitation :

"What is your name ?"

"Electra Rutherford."

"From what State do you hail ?"

"Kentucky."

"Are you a native-born Kentuckian ?"

Blushing to her temples as she recalled her grandmother's cruel words, Electra scarcely knew how to reply to this last pointed inquiry, but after a moment, gathering control, she replied :

"Yes, Madam, I am a native Kentuckian."

"And I, a New Englander. I do not know why it is that my heart should so assert itself, and confide in you, until a few minutes since, an entire stranger ; but so it is, and I can't help it. You must know that I, at an early age, was thrown upon my own resources. I had a great many temptations and trials, as have all young girls who struggle single-handed with a hard, cruel world ; but one after another I overcame them all. I have many a time stood behind dingy counters, and at the close of every month had my little bundle of notes or silver doled and haggled out to me as if I was taking the blood of my employers, in lieu of giving my own every day to the accomplishment of wearisome, allotted tasks. 'Do unto others as you would have others do unto you,' is undoubtedly an excellent 'golden rule,' but it is wonderfully *outré*. There is not much benefit to be derived from its performance. This is a world of self-interest, and to take care of one's self is about as much as can be respectably accomplished. My scanty hoard increased. I went out to the mantua-making trade, and at last 'set up' for myself. And just seven years ago I moved to B——, and with my arrival changed my name to Duboistè, being well enough acquainted with the French language to keep up the disguise. I did this because I had been impressed with a very false notion that Southern people would not recognize worth in a Northerner ; but a long residence among them has convinced me to the contrary. I now wear the name because it is much more striking and

fashionable, and everything decidedly Frenchy 'takes' the public eye and the public taste. Your face is a sweet, yes, more, it is a beautiful one, and will attract attention. Your air, too, is good, and—you see I am honest with you—I think I shall try you—say for a month—and if you please me, we will make farther arrangements. Will this suit?"

"I thank you," was all Electra could say through her gathering tears.

"Thanks are unnecessary. Remember, I take you upon your word of honor. I will give you three dollars per week, and no more. These are remarkably good wages too, by the way. You can stand at the 'lace counter.' I am a strange woman, perhaps; at any rate, I tell you now—I can forgive anything but deceit or incontinence. Such offences as these are damning, in my eyes, past all redemption."

Electra, like clear-eyed truth, looked up and smiled, though the quiver of strong emotion still pulsed in her sweet lips.

"I have no fear, Madam, of displeasing you."

"In conclusion, I tender you this advice; the more closely you follow it, the higher will you rise in my estimation, and the fewer difficulties and disappointments will confront and waylay you through life. Have but few acquaintances, and let those be moral and respectable. Attend to your business—be prompt, silent, energetic. Always do your best, and if you get into trouble, refer the matter to me for settlement. Obey me in these things and you will lose nothing."

Thus speaking, Madame Duboistè turned to a light *papier-maché* stand and pressed her finger upon the screw of a silver bell. At the clear chime which startled the silence, the silken-draped glass-door opened, and the same obsequious clerk stood upon the threshold. Assuming an air of command, she addressed him in broken English:

"Zhow dis demoiselle to de jetton nombre 181—zhe vill keep it, ci-après."

Electra rose, with a respectful bow and a grateful glance, saying:

"If Madame will pardon me, I have yet to find a quiet boarding-place—my baggage being still at the 'Planters.'"

"Ah, vell den," replied Madame Duboistè, "go ce soir, and dans le matin arrivée ici—ne remettez pas à demain ce que vous pouvez faire aujourd'hui."

Smiling and nodding, she accompanied the young girl to the street-door, and there laying her hand upon her arm, said impressively:

"Time is the only gift in which God has stinted us; for He never intrusts us with a second moment till He has taken away the first, and never leaves us certain of a third. I shall expect you to make ample, noble use of your abilities after to-day. Go down Euclid-street, you will see the name upon the corner, and you will perhaps find a boarding-place. Come early to-morrow. Au revoir—Dieu vous garde." And turning from her she went back to her reception-room.

Once more in the open air, Electra wended her way

from the busy thoroughfare to a quiet street, and at door after door she made application for boarding, and, being found deficient in "references," was everywhere refused. Dark was coming down, and her timid heart was throbbing out low, dull beats of anxiety at her continued disappointments, when she came face to face with a woman whose garb and carriage bespoke a rank in the humbler walks of life. There were lines of care, but mellowed by the light of a genial smile, on the earnest, true face, and Electra felt she had found a friend, even before she addressed her in her sweet, trembling voice :

"Madam, I am in search of a boarding-house ; can you direct me to one ? I would seek the hotel, but I am an orphan—poor—and alone in the world."

"Alone in the world ! Poor dear ! I am sorry for you. And an orphan too !"

The homely, honest face grew earnest, thoughtful, and at last an expression stole over it, smoothing out the hard lines of care and worldly struggles, and she said, with a tender sadness, looking in the young girl's dark eyes :

"An orphan ! poor dear—poor dear ! Well, honey,"—after another but a shorter pause—"I don't know who you are, nor even what you may have been, or yet will be—nor do I know your name, but I take it you are good as you are pretty. You are young and unprotected ; and although I don't take boarders as a general thing, I'll take you, if for nothing but to keep you out of harm's way, to-night anyhow," she added, half-apol-

ogetically to her conscience, which somewhat rebuked her for "taking so to strangers, all because they looked innocent."

But that reproachful voice was soon silent, and the consciousness of having done a good action dissipated all thought but of the graceful girl beside her, and that perhaps this "lift" would "save her." From what, the earnest creature never thought an instant ; only her warm heart felt a vague fear for her, as it did for all the young and the poor, and alas ! the beautiful, who throng the dense, dark streets of populous cities. The good soul had never been to "Five Points," nor even to any village outside of her native county ; but she had seen the rough sides of life, and she knew somewhat of the backsliding that masking lace veils shut out from other eyes—perhaps full of sympathy as her own faded, blue ones.

How the knowledge of a kind action warms the human heart ! How it quickens a love for God, to be happy—to find that the world is not all a Sahara—that there *are* green oases, alluring and beautiful as the Arabian's "Aiden," bright with silvery fountains and flowers, birds and broad-spreading palms !

The world is full of kindness, we all know. The great pity is, that it is seldom spoken ; and therefore it is little better than none at all. What does it boot to us that,

"Behind the cloud is the sun still shining,"

if we are never to be warmed and blessed by its smile ? What does it avail us that there is a land where the

orange and the citron bloom, if our fate is amid scenes girt by eternal ice and snow? What to us that happiness and hope were "born twins," if neither golden-winged angel comes to light our dreary hearts with its beautiful smiles?

Would there were more who yielded readily, as did this simple follower of Jesus, to the emotions of generous charity toward all who need assistance or encouragement! Was it not St. Augustine who said, "I will tell you why charity seems to be signified by oil. The Apostle says: 'I show unto you a way above the rest. Though I speak with the tongue of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.' This, *i. e.*, charity, is that above the rest which is with good reason signified by the oil. For oil swims above all liquids. Pour in oil, and pour in water upon it, and the oil will swim above. If you keep the usual order, it will be uppermost: charity never faileth."

Surely these holy words find echo in the hearts of all who read them. Not the worldly acceptance of the word "Charity" would I impress upon my reader; nor yet, such as finds expression in flowery speeches, missions, and public donations. These are not such as the angel records, no more than is the prayer of Dives heard—to sleep beside Lazarus on the bosom of Abraham; but that gentle commiseration for suffering—that strong faith which inspires great deeds and good actions—when the right hand knoweth not what the left hand doeth! This is the charity which, like oil, floats

upon adversity's dark waves; on whose arid banks the Sodom-apple grows.

And a lack of this *kind* of charity—a lack of earnestness in doing good—are the great deficiencies of the age! We have benevolence—philanthropy—talent enough; but we want enthusiasm—sympathy. We want earnest laborers in the fields of life—who can reap rich harvests of human hearts and souls for our Lord. And ah! there is something indescribably grand and sublime in the true, earnest man, who is willing to suffer in the great cause of doing good to his fellow-beings—in accomplishing deeds of virtue and truth, with principle as a moral basis to the whole! Of course cynicism and selfishness sneer; and utility, with its ruthless "*cui bono*," has no faith in such things as charity and sympathy, because they neither toil nor spin, nor yet bring in such returns as investments in petroleum and the coal-mines; but the earnest man remembers the God-given promise, "Cast thy bread upon the waters," &c.; and he knows that yet, like Archimedes, he can cry joyfully, "Eureka!" Surely and nobly was this simple woman fulfilling her mission:

"The mission of woman on earth! to give birth
To the mercy of heaven descending on earth;
The mission of woman, permitted to bruise
The head of the serpent, and sweetly infuse
Through the sorrow and sin of Earth's registered curse
The blessing which mitigates all; born to nurse,
And to soothe, and to solace—to help, and to heal
The sick world that leans on her!"

CHAPTER XXI.

THERE was sorrow at Clifton after Electra drove into B——, on that memorable day when she was so peremptorily dismissed from her service in the McDowell family. Poor Alice pined unceasingly for her love—her “adopted sister,” as she termed her friend. It was in vain her parents expostulated with her; in vain Mrs. Baird heaved sighs of regret over the temerity of the girl’s disposition in desiring to continue the acquaintance of such a person when she knew her *caste*.

And then Alice, with pain casting a shadow on her brow and contracting her sweet mouth, replied :

“But, Mrs. Baird, I don’t know it. And besides, I love her !”

“Pray, Alice, how long have you known this person?”

“Only months—but they of closest intimacy. And, Mrs. Baird, I am a believer with the poet who says :

‘We live in deeds, not years; in thoughts, not breaths;

In feelings, not in figures on a dial.

We should count time by heart-throbs. He most lives

Who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts the best.’”

The ties of friendship cannot be severed by any episode which slander or sorrow may create; but these

things lengthen them as heat the ductile threads of gold, or the blows of a hammer upon silver-plate. These ties reach through infinite space; they pass from soul to soul, like messages of hope along the world’s electric media, and unite them indissolubly—as life is linked to death.

It was in vain they rallied her. She sank daily. A slow fever set in, which so debilitated her that she could scarcely (and seldom did) rise from her bed. Wasted away to almost transparent thinness—a scarlet hectic on her cheek continually—the physician only looked down on her, parted her fair curls, and sighed, for well he knew her girlish feet were ere long to tread

——“The altar stairs
That slope through darknees up to God.”

The trip to England was abandoned, and a gloom settled over the inmates of “Clifton” impossible to describe or to dissipate. A quietude almost of the grave reigned everywhere; all sounds were muffled, each face anxious, for Alice was dying, they believed. And ah! how few of us but have experienced these sad, heart-crushing, soul-subduing vigils—while waiting for the return of health and strength; counting the flickering pulse through each hour; waiting for rest and peace, rest from life’s perplexing cares, and peace from all the doubts and sorrows that assail our faith in God!

The physician still continued his visits, still administered invigorating cordials and wines, but when questioned pointedly, one day, regarding Allie’s health, he

honestly replied: "Sir, she may linger a year—or until Spring, or she may die to-morrow. Hypertrophy of the heart is the most deceptive of all diseases; indeed it baffles human skill. I cannot tell how long she will last, nor can any one know but God. But of one thing I am certain, a weight of care lowers over her. I have often questioned her regarding her feelings, but she denies the existence of any trouble, and afterward sighs so heavily that I question the truth of her denial."

Mr. McDowell here explained the dismissal of Electra, and why, to which the Doctor gave ready reply:

"Sir, your daughter is constitutionally delicate. You are aware she can never attain the age of womanhood. I tell you of the precarious state of her health, and *this*—if you would have her live till the Spring-flowers blossom, summon that girl back. Thus, and *thus alone*, can you lengthen the life of your child!"

"But—"

Mr. McDowell paused, flushing to his temples.

"But what?" asked the physician, sternly.

"The character of the girl: what will the world—"

The Doctor interrupted him angrily:

"The world—the world! that is the everlasting hue-and-cry! The world! Mighty globe! And pray tell me, Mr. McDowell, how much you think the people of an earth twenty-five thousand miles in circumference will interest themselves with your private affairs, or which one will again put breath, when once it ceases, into the body of your dead child. No doubt you are a person of great note, great importance, but I question

very seriously if the dynasty of the French Empire will be changed—if the Czar of Russia will send you a 'gnome-eye diamond,' or a great revolution take place in Crim-Tartary—if you do summon a beloved friend to the bedside of your dying child, in defiance of the women who hold up their fingers and cry, 'Fie, fie, for shame!' as the girl did to the cat when she lapped in the cream without permission. You tell me you adore your child, and yet you would allow a pack of don't-care, impudent imps to step between you and that which you are forced to recognize as a moral and humane duty."

Mr. McDowell was convinced, but still an obstacle was in the way—he did not know Electra's whereabouts. He caught the Doctor's hand, saying in an earnest tone:

"My friend, you are right, and I am wrong. I will summon Miss Rutherford back—but how?"

"How? Why, write a note and send for her; or, better still, go after her."

"But where?"

"Well, that part of the question you ought to be better able to answer than I."

"But I am not. She left here nearly two months ago. Now, I am utterly ignorant of her whereabouts."

"Then advertise—advertise! For mark what I tell you: it is only a little longer, a very little longer, that the violets shall bloom for Alice—the sun shine, or the birds sing."

The warm-hearted gentleman turned away with a

strange dimness in his eyes, and springing into his buggy, drove rapidly from view.

Aubin McDowell stood alone on the terrace, looking off over the wide fields and wooded hills into the distance, where the silver-footed twilight followed, slow and sadly, the dead day to its grave, all wrapped in a shroud of rosy and palely-golden clouds.

"A little longer, a very little longer, shall the violets bloom for Alice—the sun shine, or the birds sing!"

The man repeated the words over with a gasp. What would the world be to him without Alice? Literally a desert.

"O God! I am very miserable!"

His head sank on his breast as this despairing cry rose to his lips. Ay! and he *was* miserable; for he knew that he had made unto himself an earth-idol which, in an instant, might be shaken from its pedestal, and shivered into atoms at his feet. God holds no covenants with those who forget His omnipotence, for he has said in the Decalogue, "I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God;" and it well befits us to hearken unto Him. Rousing himself at last, Aubin McDowell re-entered the house, and went directly to his daughter's room.

She lay upon a sofa before the glowing fire, Mrs. McDowell bending tenderly over her. Looking up as her husband advanced, she whispered:

"She sleeps again."

"How painfully she breathes!"

Mrs. McDowell's lip quivered as she saw the almost

maddening look of despair on her husband's face. Putting her arm up caressingly about his neck, and leaning her graceful head on his shoulder, she murmured:

"Aubin, try to bear it. Whatever trial or burden is forced upon us—whatever cup is pressed to our lips—we should remember, even while draining the bitterest dregs, that God is the giver of all. But I was thinking—"

She paused.

"What?" asked Mr. McDowell, in a tone of suppressed anxiety.

"Perhaps, if we could get Miss Rutherford back again—"

"Just the proposition I was about to make to you. Let us seek her," said her husband, eagerly.

Before she could reply, the door again opened, and Mrs. Baird entered in travelling attire.

"Well, my friends," she murmured, in a low voice, "I must be off at last. I cannot hope to adequately express my enjoyment during this unconscionably long visit, nor how inexpressibly sad I am at leaving you in grief. But I hope Alice will be better soon, and that we may yet meet in the historic climes of the Old World."

Delaying her long enough to tell of their resolution to recall Electra, Mrs. McDowell, with numberless kisses, bade her friend "good-bye," and Mr. McDowell accompanied her to the carriage-door. Just as she clasped his hand in farewell, she said to him in an earnest tone:

"My friend, you perhaps may not comprehend the depth of the error you have, or are about to commit in summoning Miss Rutherford back to 'Clifton.' She is no proper companion for Allie."

Mr. McDowell looked troubled; but after a pause replied in his usual measured accents:

"Madam, I thank you for your interest; but the physician has required the reappearance of Miss Rutherford if I would save the life of my child, and I *must* recall her."

The beautiful woman replied never a word—only withdrew her hand and leaned back in the carriage. Mr. McDowell closed the door, and then lifted his hat politely until the carriage turned and Mrs. Baird was lost to view.

And she sat looking out of the window; and, after arranging every thought satisfactorily, laughed lightly while she said:

"Ah, well, my friends. One thing I know—

'The best laid plans o' mice and men
Gang aft agley;'

and Miss Rutherford will never go back to Clifton."

No passion so often arrogates to itself the claims of virtue while planning deeds that would make demons blush, as revenge.

When the carriage rolled from the avenue, Mrs. Baird bade the driver go to Madame Dubois's variety-store. What occurred there remains yet to be seen.

Certain it is that when the advertisements and notices

to Miss Rutherford appeared in the city papers, poor Electra never saw them; for a mad fever rioted in her own rich veins, threatening to destroy her. So the days wore on, to anxious hearts, wearily at Clifton, and equally so in the attic room at Mrs. Wade's humble home.

Oh, mother, in your quiet grave in the churchyard at N——, you slumbered in your earthliness; but the divine spirit which that earthliness once enshrined, ever and always, tenderly watched above the wearisome, stony, brier-strewn path of your poor darling!

"They sin who tell us love can die:
With life all other passions fly—
All others are but vanity."



CHAPTER XXII.

ELECTRA'S month of probation had passed, and with a heart full of hope, in spite of all past sorrow and sadness, she was still looking forward to the goal of her life. Never for one instant did the holy star, shining over her dead mother's last earthly home, dim its lustre, and now that she was at work again—respected by her employer, intrusted with the position of "Head Saleswoman," and consulted upon all secret matters of importance by Madame Du-boistè—while living her pure, blameless beautiful life, she was the envy and admiration of all her co-laborers. Now that she did not have so much time to mourn over the great grief which constantly beset her in her idle hours at "Clifton," a look of more resolute coldness, as though she had ceased to value earth's mocking things, took the place of that heart-touching, trustful tenderness which had marked it with a certain sadness of its own in the days of yore.

One day, as she stood discoursing with an old gentleman on the respective merits of "Jouvin" and "Alexandrè" gloves, the street-door suddenly opened and closed, and a lady, superbly attired, stepped up to the counter near the speakers, and inquired in a singularly sweet voice :

"Will you oblige me by directing me to the lace-counter?"

"In one moment, Madam," said Electra, as she caught up a bit of white wrapping-paper and rolled within it the kids which the gentleman customer had just purchased. The note he extended was slipped into the till, and then with a polite bow she turned to the lady, saying :

"Now, Madam, I am at your service."

The new customer put back her veil from her fair, beautiful face, and asked, in a cold voice :

"Can it be possible that Electra Rutherford, the dismissed governess from 'Clifton,' addresses me?"

"I am one and the same," replied Electra, now with equal hauteur, discovering the customer to be Mrs. Mary Baird. "In what can I serve you?"

"In nothing," replied Mrs. Baird, icily, as she swept on past the various counters, and entered Madame Du-boistè's reception-room.

Electra was sadly restless ; she was absolutely miserable. Yet if any one had questioned her, she would have found it impossible to give voice to her contending emotions. She feared, she scarce knew what, as with bated breath and anxious eyes, she waited for that "interview" to terminate. She had enjoyed repose long enough—some evil spirit seemed hissing about her—it was time to sweep out the sunbeams and set the spiders of despair to work at their noiseless looms ; it was time to raze her castle to the earth, and overgrow the ruins with the noxious, cruel weeds of worldliness.

Half an hour passed; and then Mrs. Baird, with a triumphant, malignant leer, hideously transforming her, came out and paused beside her long enough to hiss, serpent-like:

"I have accomplished what I intended. I came here to-day to ruin you, and I *have done it*. You shall never succeed! I hate you, and every drop of blood that pulses in your veins is cursed!"

She was gone—gliding, smiling, graceful, glittering—and Electra, heaving a deep breath, dropped her head forward on her counter, moaning:

"Father in heaven, *what have I done* that this sorrow should be visited upon me? Wherefore press the heavy cross upon my young shoulders? Have I not enough to bear without this?"

"Miss Rutherford," spoke a salesman at the desk. But the respectful tone was unheeded. Electra's lips were quivering—her teeth set hard—the bitter tears falling fast.

"Miss Rutherford!"

This time she heard.

"What is it?" she asked, without raising her head from its position on her folded arms.

"Madame Duboistè wishes to speak with you privately."

"Very well," replied Electra, in the same weary, stifled tone, "I will be with her in an instant."

Hastily wiping away the tears, she composed herself by straightening back the papers on the counter, and replacing some box-tops, and shutting up the glass lid

to her show-case. Then, calm and self-possessed, she sought the presence of her employer.

"Madam, I am here."

Her voice was tremulous with emotion.

Madame Duboistè, without turning her head to notice her, without even laying aside the book she was reading, remarked, in an icy tone:

"Young woman, you will find your wages upon the table. Take them, I need your services no longer."

"But, Madam!" said Electra, in an anxious, surprised voice.

"I wish no words; I warned you the first day I hired you," said Madame, in the same icy tones.

"But let me explain!" cried the wretched girl, in an eager, passionate way, as she knelt beside the silken-draped lounge.

Madame Duboistè sat upright, her face as hard and pitiless as flint.

"Your wages are on that table; take them and be gone—and that, too, without a word."

Electra, aroused now, sprang to her feet, and with livid face and blazing eyes, confronted her employer.

"My wages I accept, because I have earned them by the 'sweat of my brow;' and I go forth from you with but this farewell remark: I am innocent of offence, and since you refuse me the immunity of explanation, may God deal by your prosperity as you do by me this day!"

"And that will be justly—go!" said Madame Duboistè, sternly.

Electra was almost wild, her heart was beating in her throat with a sensation of choking—her lips were parched, her brow throbbing to bursting, her eyes burning, for they were too hot for tears now, her brain whirling. She felt that if she remained there much longer she should go mad. Without a single word but a low “God forgive you, as I shall strive to do,” she retired, and gaining, with rapid steps, her counter, she put on her bonnet and cloak, and with the same quick, unsteady motion, went out into the open air. How she gained the crossing on Euclid-street, she never knew; she was jostled hither and thither by the hurrying crowd; the keen wintry wind blew against her, and catching her veil whirled it aloft like a black banner to the sun; but she never essayed to imprison it. At last the “Rubicon was passed,” she stood upon the familiar step-stones—she groped blindly about for the bell—she could not find it. She sat down on the door-step, believing if she could be quiet one minute she would be well again. But suddenly a whirl of dizziness assailed her, and she fell forward on her face, her head striking the corner of the stone step, and the blow inflicting a deep wound upon her temple, from which the purple-red blood oozed rapidly. Just then a tall, stately-looking man, his face shaded by heavy beard, stepped around the street. With a shade of pity on his handsome face, he stooped to assist the prostrate woman; but perceiving that blood was flowing from the hidden temple, he sprang up the step, rang the bell violently, and returning lifted the graceful form in his arms, as lightly as if she had been a child. One glance

and a wild thrilling cry of joy rose upward past the gloomy housetops—past the floating clouds.

“Thank God, thank God—I have found my darling at last!”

The door opened and Mrs. Wade peered curiously, then wildly out, as she beheld Electra.

“What is the matter with my poor dove? Oh, sir, pray God no harm has befallen her!” she cried, in an agitated voice.

“She is ill—only show me her room—I am her relative!” he replied, impatiently.

Mrs. Wade led the way up the narrow flights of stairs to the attic—to Electra’s little chamber.

“Now, summon medical assistance,” he said, depositing his precious burden on the bed.

And as Mrs. Wade, half frightened out of her wits, hastened away, he threw himself beside the lifeless form, and, pressing wild kisses on the pallid, blue-lipped face, moaned:

“And oh, my darling, my darling! have I found you—at last?”

Thus William Hayden wept and rejoiced over her whom he had deemed forever lost—but still pursued—as humanity follows in the wake of Hope.

“As light November snows to empty nests,
As grass to graves, as moss to mildewed stones,
As July suns to ruins, through the rents,
As ministering spirits to mourners, through a loss,
As Heaven itself to men, through pangs of death,
He came uncalled wherever grief had come—
And so . . . they met anew—
And added softly—*so, we shall not part!*”

CHAPTER XXIII.

ANOTHER twelvemonth had slipped away. A year, with its thousand stirring vicissitudes in life; its toils, struggles, hopes and fears, its joys and sorrows; its successes and disappointments; its changing seasons, from shadow to sunshine; its long winter, with its deep snows, and ice-bound rivers, and leaden-gray skies; its blooming spring and luxurious summer; its gorgeous autumn, when the woods were painted red and yellow by the inspired brush of Nature—one year had passed, and Spring was tripping over the earth, wreathed in flowers and breathing perfume.

It was a balmy day in May. The golden sunlight lay in broad rifts of brightness on the green, velvety sward of the lawn; the flowers nodded their graceful heads; the cicadas drowsily hummed; the bees and the butterflies circled in the sunshine; and down in the park, dense as those of ancient Melibocus, the shadows from the lofty oaks, and the dark clustering boughs of the sturdy cedars, threw cool welcome to the wandering zephyrs from dreamland. And richer, clearer, sweeter far than the ringing chimes of tiny silver bells, was the unceasing warble of the birds in the leafy boughs.

Elegant acacia-trees, nodding lilacs, ardent carna-

tions, and sweet heliotropes, mingled their balms with the sighs from a garden of roses. Fountains, too, flashed their musical spray in broad, marble basins, where shy sunfish darted through the dimpled waters to kiss the shadows of the gold-hearted purple pansies, ever bending their beautiful blossoms over the Etruscan-carved rims of the verd-antique chalices. Long, gravelled walks, fringed with evenly-trimmed boxwood, wound in and out this world of blooms, and finally terminated in a broad carriage "turn" before a splendid mansion.

And this was Evesham "Hall," the residence of Claude Pemberton Evesham, son of a direct ancestral line counting back to 1259 A. D.

The house was built of dun-colored sandstone, common to that region of country, two stories high, and surmounted by a circular balustrade. But imposing as it was without, it excelled in excellence and elegance within. The wide halls and lofty apartments, frescoed in the richest colors, were complete in their various compartments. Every luxury which gold could yield was possessed by the owner, and yet he had never been happy—was oftentimes moody, always cynical, cold, stern. A shadow lay upon his brow, his heart, which earthly success had no power to dissipate. In vain he wandered in foreign countries; in vain returned to seclude himself amid the vernal beauties of his home; that phantom of sorrow—that

"Hades of life-long regret"—

ever pursued him. Alike to him to possess the rarest

treasures of land and sea, or rest upon the hard cot and partake of the mountaineer's humble fare in the Swiss *châlets*; for,

"As round the dial, through the day,
The shadow travels with the sun,
The shade of care across his way
Pursued its course till his was run."

And now he lay dead in the stately drawing-room below stairs!

Yes, dead—although surrounded by the costly works of art from the looms of Persia and Turkey, and the mines of Potosi and Golconda, with specimen rocks from immemorial *Petræa*, intaglioed marbles from Etruria, and sweet, resinous woods from the groves and gardens of Ceylon and the Maldivé Isles.

There he lay—the sweep of the velvet pall enriched with embroidered escutcheons of gold, and set round with sombre black plumes. The apartment was dim, only feebly illuminated with waxen tapers in silver and golden *candelabra*. And this was all that remained of him! (What a commentary upon the vanity of rank; the glory of genius; the fallacy of fame; the mockery of wealth!) Down to the dust at last—levelled with the worm—food for it—in spite of golden escutcheons, sable plume, and velvet pall. Down to the silent grave, to corrupt, even as the humble beggar and the obsequious vassal! Slowly the carved and panelled doors rolled back on their silver hinges, and a tall, graceful form, robed in mourning, entered the chamber of the

dead. The man's face was pale, emaciated. A gloom rested upon the high, broad brow, and an uncommonly beautiful beard descended in silky luxuriance upon his breast. Yet amid all these disguises could the olden grace of manner and the olden glory of dark eyes trace out the hero of Electra Rutherford's love, and the visitor at Beechmoor, Lynn Evesham, now master of the "Hall" in right of hereditary claims of his father as the second grandson, to whom he was sole heir. Advancing with folded arms he stood beside the coffin, and looking down upon it, murmured in low, thrilling tones:

"And is this indeed the end of all? Was it for this that he was created? Was it for this that he loved, struggled, studied, travelled, and suffered? Was it for *this*—to die? To be laid away silent, cold, desolate? Oh! soul of my uncle, where art thou? Can it be that I will never gaze upon thy dear face again? Never warm beneath thy smile? never feel the caress of thy kindly hand? never listen to the mellow music of thy gentle voice? Canst thou not break the silent seal of the grave? Canst thou not light the Egyptian darkness of the awful tomb? Thou art silent—cold! How fearful the spell! How potent is Death to seal those kindly lips to me! And can it be that thou—even thou, oh, loved uncle!—art bound in the clankless chain of eternal silence—perpetual stillness? Indeed! is this death? And what—oh! what to me is wealth, rank, at such a cost—that of my best friend!"

Overcome with emotions of sorrow and regret, he

knelt upon the luxurious carpet, and hiding his pallid face in the sombre pall, he wept bitter, scalding tears.

The young scion, looking upon his past life, saw that some of Hope's leaves were "pallid, and sombre, and ruddy." And the Marah-taste was on his lips, of

"Dead fruits of the fugitive years ;
Some stained as with wine and made bloody,
And some as with tears."

At an early age he had been left an orphan, and his uncle's wife dying without issue, he had been taken to the "Hall" as heir-presumptive to the estates of "Evesham Hall" and "Aylesford." Not a cloud of sorrow or regret had dimmed the sky of his youth. Manhood attained, he had been allowed by his uncle ample means to travel whithersoever the impulse wooed him. And following the bent of inclination, after roaming over the "Old World" he had, at twenty-nine years of age, sailed for America. His dreams of life had all been golden dreams. They had been woven of bright anticipations ! Alas ! that such should ever be ruined in the loom or warped in the woof ! Like the opaline light of the morning, these hopes had vanished—sweetness, fragrance, freshness all gone. One fell frost had blighted the blossoms, and their rare beauty was gone forever ; but the ripe odor of the gold-veined, ruby-streaked pomegranate was in his heart and on his breath, when, in the pleasant town of Brockville, Canada, he formed the acquaintance of Dr. Brandenburg while skating on the "Central Rink." A visit to "Beechmoor" followed. What were his experiences

after that, until he married, we already know. But subsequently—it would fill a volume.

Kneeling there by the magnificent coffin which enclosed the remains of the man who had been as a kind and indulgent father to him, he reviewed his past life, lingering over those days at Beechmoor with a passionate tenderness impossible to curb or control. And of Fanny, as connected with them, he thought with an irrepressible shudder ; for ere the "honeymoon" had passed he had learned it was his gold and his rank she had wedded, and *not* the man !

Most of all, however, in those moments when bound, Prometheus-like, to the rock of the past, did Lynn Evesham think of the letter which he had an hour before found in his uncle's writing-desk directed to him, and marked "Important" very conspicuously. He had read it over and over again, each time finding food for thought and the most poignant and bitter regret.

The communication was earnest, like the writer :

"MY DEAR NEPHEW : I have taken up my pen to-night to make a communication to you, from which I shrink more than you can imagine, and perhaps will be able to understand ; but justice to the *living* and my beloved dead, strengthens me to lift the veil from my heart and lay bare the inmost secrets of my life. Enclosed you will find a certificate of marriage between Miss Electra Dudley, of M—, Kentucky, and myself ; and now— (Here the page was blotted, as if with tears, and the caligraphy gave, in uneven strokes,

some so faint as to be scarcely discernible, evidence of great agitation.) Boy! I loved her—as I never loved other living thing. I was a man of marked dissipation. I had rank, personal attractions, and my grandfather gave me unlimited funds. America possessed a charm for me, as it has subsequently done for you. I went to New York, and had not been in the city six weeks before I became madly, desperately enamored of a school-girl whom I met on Broadway. It was not a love to be controlled. I left the city. I returned again and found myself eagerly anticipating the hours of her promenades; and all this without having any personal acquaintance. It was joy to bask simply in the light of her presence. Finally, my admiration attracted her attention. By a fortunate circumstance I formed the acquaintancé of one of her friends, and obtained a ticket to attend Madame D——g's weekly *soirées* and *conversazioni*; and here I was introduced to her. Such devotion as I lavished upon her, woman seldom receives; but, ah! there are few, if any, who can compare with her. After weeks, months of torturing doubt, she confessed a reciprocity of affection. To enumerate, even to you, all that passed between us would be impossible. She was very beautiful!—lightly made, graceful limbs, soft, silky hair, and hazel eyes mingling dew and fire in their mysterious depths, a sad, Spanishy face, with sweet low brow, and red, bewildering mouth! She was very young also—only sixteen, but apparently about nineteen or twenty; and she possessed a mind as pure as the sunshine. And, ah! I

loved her! She had a rival, a Miss Mary Benham, afterward Mrs. Baird, who not long ago was divorced from her husband. This woman left no opportunity ungrasped to revenge herself for unrequited affection, after she discovered the mutual passion of Electra and myself, and reported it to the principal of the seminary—a hard, irascible preceptress—with her own elaborate inuendoes. Electra was in despair. Her mother she described to me as 'stern and cold;' and at last, when informed by this Miss Benham that she would be publicly dismissed from the school, she eloped with me. (I have since learned from Madame D——g that no such action was contemplated.) We married privately, and lived in extreme retirement—never visiting even public places of amusement, or the tabernacles dedicated to God's worship. Why, I blush to confess: my grandfather's landed estates would descend to me by hereditary claim; but without an income, I would have been unable to support myself 'as a gentleman.' My grandfather had often vowed if I married other than an English woman—or one of these, even, without his consent—he would give his 'Bank Stock' to his second grandson (your father), who had married and was an officer in the 'Thessalia Guards,' and had one son (yourself), a boy of perhaps eleven years. I was selfish. I could not resign the gold; therefore I communicated none of these facts to Electra,—save that I was heir to an immense property, and that I would lose everything if the secret of our marriage was disclosed before I assumed control of it. This placed a seal

upon her lips—which even death was powerless to break. I loved her better than I did my own soul. God knows I would have died for her! But to live deprived of selfish enjoyments! Months passed; no storied bliss equalled ours. At last the blow descended. My grandfather summoned me to England. He wished me to marry Miss Clara Stanhope, heiress of Aylesford in Westmoreland. I cannot attempt to delineate for you the struggle between love and avarice in my heart. It almost killed me, but to my shame be it told, avarice finally prevailed, and I left Electra—my beautiful and well-beloved Electra—left her with the bliss of maternity in her dreams, forcibly impressing upon her the necessity of perfect secrecy as to the name she bore, or who was the father of her child. Lest she might be tempted to betray me, I brought the enclosed certificate over the ocean with me, guarding it carefully, for I fully intended returning to her. And so we parted—and so met not again. Arriving in England, the preliminaries had all been arranged, and nothing remained for me to do but to marry the heiress—which I accordingly did. Clara was a constant invalid—homely—phlegmatic—frigid in her address, and with a whining voice and weak nerves. She was six years my senior; and added to all these things she was constantly afflicted with neuralgia, which caused her to use a great many opiates. Of course the atmosphere about her was impregnated with the odor of these noxious narcotics. She did not survive one year of connubial existence, and I was ransomed, and heir to her property. Soon

after, my grandfather died of epilepsy. You were, now, also an orphan, and heir-presumptive. You had finished your course at Harrow, and I sent you to the University in Saxe Weimar. While your education was being completed I was a wanderer. Free, once more, I sought America. I returned to the olden haunts; and the desolate silence of the grave alone echoed my sobs and mourning. The home we had known, and in which we had been so happy, was tenantless, save for the ghastly, stalking ghosts of memories that glared at me aloof, and pointed silent fingers of scorn at me from every nook and cranny. I learned, after so long a time, that Electra had summoned her mother to her, in her distress, and that the woman's heart melted for the sweet sufferer, enough for her to receive from my darling's dying arms *our child*. Our child! Ah! have I not dreamed of her baby-voice prattling 'Papa' musically to my enchanted ears! Have I not heard the patter of her tiny feet—the ring of her childish laughter! Have I not seen her rosy cheek pillowed against the velvety bosom of her mother! Oh! Lynn—Lynn!

"Where Mrs. Dudley went I could not learn. I traced her to her old home in M——, Kentucky, but from thence she had gone, none knew whither. In vain were inquiries instituted, in vain were advertisements inserted—I could learn nothing. To England I returned, with a heart bowed and broken by my deserved, but crushing misfortunes. After years passed in the sackcloth and ashes of undying regret—after passing

down into the Valley of Shadow—I went to America again; but my attempts to discover my child were abortive, as those of the past had been. My health is rapidly declining. I am well aware that this disease, hypertrophy of the heart—which is hereditary—is incurable. And to your honor I leave the duty of discovering if my child still lives. I learned in N—that it was a girl; and it was my desire to cement a union between you two; but of course that hope is past now. I want you, if my daughter is found, to give her a life-estate in the ‘Hall,’ and I desire you to reside with Fanny at ‘Aylesford.’ Of course if my daughter marries, or has done so, her heir inherits the ‘Hall;’ and I would be happier with the consciousness that it would be *her* home—as I once intended it should be her mother’s. This is my dying request. By your hopes of heaven, do not fail to heed it. God]guide you!

“Your affectionate uncle,

“CLAUDE PEMBERTON EVESHAM.”

Was it a wonder that Lynn Evesham wept when he remembered the fair-faced girl whose heart he had won—and lost? Surely the sting of the adder remorse struck deep into his soul! And this was punishment enough.

The sound of footsteps advancing disturbed his self-communion, and rising, he retired by another door than that by which he entered, and succeeded in reaching his own apartment without being disturbed by the

“vives” and Evoes!” that welcome the heirs of rank and wealth into their respective social offices, forgetful of the new-made mound, or the royally palled coffin yet above the sod. But what matter?

“All silent as the marble turrets gleaming
Above them, they repose;
Unseen life’s sunshine o’er those roofs is streaming,
Unheard its tempest blows.”



CHAPTER XXIV.

MR. EVESHAM sat in the library, with the amber mouthpiece of an elegant meerschaum caught between his teeth. He was not smoking, however; his reverie was too deep for that. But suddenly the sound of a tinkling guitar, playing a gay Maltese tune, broke upon the languid air, and a sweet voice chanted in accompaniment that airy chanson of Moore's:

"How gayly sounds the castanet,
Beating time to bounding feet!"

A sound as of a door slammed violently followed the cessation of the song, and an instant later Mrs. Evesham appeared upon the threshold of the library.

She spoke in a pettish, querulous tone:

"Lynn, in pity's name tell me how many more weeks this mourning in sackcloth and ashes is to last! I am miserably weary of the farce; and, to confess the truth, I shall die if you don't allow me to find some recourse from this horrible *ennui*. For my part, I cannot comprehend the sense of all this 'silent grief' for a man's death, when it makes you rich as a nabob, and me as a Begum! I don't deny that I am glad of it! Why, I wouldn't mourn for mother any longer than you have done for him. I would have my 'cry' out,

and be done with it. We all have to pay the debt sooner or later, and I want my own enjoyment while I can get it."

How like a petted princess in a fairy tale she looked—a charming Gracieuse, such as the Countess d'Alnoy describes! If she had been pretty and irresistible when a simple girl, the graceful air of a *châtelaine* only heightened her attractions. The wild, zephyr-like lightness of her address, and her beauty, had lost that prairie-rose freshness which once distinguished her; but now, an air of artistic elegance, even more fascinating, lingered around her, as soft as the glory about one of Perugino's saints. The yellow hair, wont to flow free as her fancy, in floss-like ringlets to her waist, was braided and fastened into festoons with jewelled combs. Her face was perfectly colorless; her features sharper than of yore, and cold and expressionless as those on cornelian or azure cameo; her robe was a rich, lustreless silk, relieved at the throat and wrists by ruffles of lace. Mr. Evesham raised his eyes languidly, and contemplated her for an instant; then with a short whiff of his meerschaum, resumed his reverie.

"That is the way you are taught courtesy this side the world, is it?" said Fanny, with an angry ejaculation, as she advanced into the room, and taking her stand before a bookcase, commenced pulling out and replacing the gorgeous volumes ranged on the shelves. "Well, thank Heaven, a Kentuckian knows what is due to a lady, whether she is his wife or not."

"And so does an Englishman," replied Mr. Eve-

sham, with a tantalizing little scoff in the metallic ring of his voice, as he again turned his gaze—now half-admiringly—upon her: “and as much may be said of English women regarding their husbands. But then *English* women are affectionate and refined, and they are proud to show all deference to their liege-lords. They are proud, too, to wield a power over their husband’s hearts over and above the gold in their pockets, practical though they are. Interested in the performance of all duties and fireside charities, they ever find a way to put new hearts in their husbands’ struggles, and to soothe, to cheer, and to love them!”

Mrs. Evesham did not reply for a moment; and when she did, it was with a dull glare in her eyes, as she threw herself on an ottoman facing the open window, near which her husband sat.

“It is a miserable pity that we were ever yoked together, my *Lord*—isn’t it?”

“Well—yes,” replied Mr. Evesham, half hesitatingly; “at least if such is your opinion. I am not so ungallant as to disagree with you regarding it.”

“Yes, a miserable pity. I have learned to my sorrow, that

“Better than gold is a peaceful home,
Where all the fireside charities come:
However humble the home may be,
Or tried with sorrow by Heaven’s decree,
The blessings that never were bought or sold,
And centre there, are better than gold.”

She was talking in a meditative tone, as though giv-

ing expression to her own thoughts, rather than carrying on a conversation with him.

“‘Blue blood and diamonds don’t pay the piper,’ do they, Lady Fanny? One gets weary of all that in time, just as a bird does of its golden cage when it catches a glimpse of blue sky in the distance—eh?”

“Yes, weary *à la mort!*” said she, looking earnestly in his cold, calm face. “Mr. Evesham, there are not two ideas in our heads, two pulses of our hearts in unison. I begin really to think I would have been better off if I had married ‘Cousin Tom,’ and settled down at ‘Beechmoor;’ and you, if you had married Electra Rutherford.”

“Ah—h—h—h!”

Mr. Evesham drew his breath hard between his teeth, and then gave it to the winds again, with a kind of sobbing sigh.

“You agree with me, then?”

Fanny spoke in a quick, excited tone; but her husband vouchsafed her no reply.

“I say, you agree with me that it would have been better for both of us if I had yoked myself to Cousin Tom, and left you free to marry that girl, Electra Rutherford? Answer me.”

“You mistake, Fanny, the heart of the man you call ‘Cousin Tom,’ when you think he would have married other than the mistress of his affections.”

“And she—?”

Mrs. Evesham interrupted him with the inquiry—

“Was Miss Rutherford,” replied Mr. Evesham with

evident effort, which did not escape his wife's notice.

"Well, be that as it may, it does not matter now ; but you have not replied to the question concerning your preference for Electra. I wish to know if you do not believe you would have been happier with her as your wife, than you are with me?"

She fastened her eyes persistently on his face, and he returned her earnest gaze with one equally firm and unflinching, as he replied :

"And that is a question which you have no right to ask ; and it exhibits a curiosity which I have not the remotest idea of gratifying. It is enough for us to know that we are united in the 'holy bonds,' and that we would both be better satisfied if we paid our votive offerings oftener to our household gods. Bear and forbear. You must remember, my wife, that without domestic happiness our lives will be as wrecks—our hearts 'howling wildernesses'—no cup can we press to our lips which will not be impregnated with Marah—no dream of pleasure can be cherished which will not fade ;—and *with* domestic peace, all life shall 'blossom as the rose.'"

Mr. Evesham laid aside his meerschaum as he spoke ; then rising, he advanced to the side of his wife, and stood, in half-smiling earnestness over her. He and his fair *chatelaine* had not been upon the most amiable terms lately. She rebelled against the persistency of his retirement after his uncle's demise,—a retirement which had now lengthened from April to the last of June, and

threatened to advance into August without intermission of gentler melancholy ; and he held a firm hand on the rein of authority, and kept her pretty well curbed in, an action which utterly failed to control her feminine prerogative. She raised her eyes to his face, rewarding his smiling effort for peace with a dull stare :

"It seems that you have steeped your sermon in your heart before you preached it ; but, to confess the honest truth, I do not understand what chimera you are pursuing. Please explain. I may be dull of comprehension, but then you should remember that I have none of Electra's 'intuitive wit,' and that syllogisms, apothegms, and symbology give me a pain in my head !"

"I simply mean, Fanny, that we must 'bear and forbear,' and that thus only will we become contented and empowered to mutually confer happiness upon each other. I have been thinking over in my mind to-day of that beautiful passage of Dr. John Cummings, the finest that he ever wrote. Do you remember—I repeated it to you the other day?"

"I have forgotten."

"Well, he says, 'that on the shores of the Adriatic sea the wives of the fishermen, whose husbands have gone far out upon the deep, are in the habit at eventide of going down to the seashore and singing, as female voices only can, the first stanza of a beautiful hymn ; after they have sung it, they listen till they hear, borne by the wind across the desert sea, the second stanza, sung by their gallant husbands as they are tossed

by the gale upon the waves ; and both are happy. Perhaps, if we could listen, we too might hear on this desert world of ours some sound, some whisper borne from afar to remind us that there is a heaven and a home ; and when we sing the hymn upon the shores of earth, perhaps we shall hear its sweet echoes breaking in music upon the sands of time and cheering the hearts of them that are pilgrims and strangers and look for a city that hath foundations.' We live very unhappily together, my wife ; these little dissensions may be compared to the termites of the tropics ; they will ultimately destroy us. Let us avoid them, so that when Age sits at our hearthstone our memories shall be

'As pearls set in a casket.'

He bent down and lifted one little delicate hand in his own, toying with the graceful fingers with something of the olden gallant air of a lover.

"Lamont says : 'Let your life be a commentary on your sermons.' Perhaps you do not read Lamont, though, Mr. Evesham. But really what you have said *sounds* very prettily, but it is poor in practice," said Fanny, coldly. "I have, though, in my mind a maxim to which you do live up in your married life."

"Honor me with a recitation, pray," replied Mr. Evesham, the smile fading away from his face as he replaced Fanny's hand by her side.

"It is woman's lot to suffer ; it is man's to act, woman's to bear," she answered, coldly. "Go on then acting, and I'll bear ; as to the *for-bearing*—pshaw !"

She turned off with a sneer curling her pretty lip.

Mr. Evesham made no reply, and silence for a few moments weighed heavily on them. At last Mrs. Evesham broke it by a query :

"Concerning this property and 'Aylesford,' at which do you intend to reside permanently ?"

"Aylesford. This place I do not claim now—save as heir-presumptive—at least under circumstances not yet ascertained."

"What do you mean ? I do not comprehend you," said Mrs. Evesham.

Going to an ebony escritoire, richly inlaid with pearl, he opened a secret drawer and took from it the marriage license between his uncle Claude and Electra Dudley, and, returning, handed it to his wife, while he took a vacant chair beside her. She read it, but the same incomprehensive expression sat regnant upon her cold, white face—cold and white as alabaster as she said :

"I see, but I cannot understand. Pray explain."

"Simply this : my uncle Claude was married twice ; but fearing his grandfather's displeasure, and his consequent loss of property, the fact of the first marriage was kept a profound secret. You must know, for years the house of the Eveshams has only had female lineal descendants, though each daughter has given a scion to the house ; and as it is hereditary estate, we each, when possessing it, bear the title of Evesham. My great-grandfather possessed bank-stock to an immense amount, which he was at liberty to will to any

child he chose. Uncle Claude was his favorite. But his grandfather had an intense aversion to all women under the sun other than English women, and he often threatened Uncle Claude (who was avaricious) with a gift of his bank-stock to my father (an officer in the 'Thessalia Guards'), should he ever marry a foreigner, or any woman, against his will. As I asserted a moment ago, Uncle Claude secretly disobeyed him: married an American—a Kentuckian—and afterward deserted her; committing bigamy to possess himself of 'Aylesford.' In the course of the year both wives died—the latter without issue; the former leaving one child—a daughter. This girl grew up, under the care of her grandmother, both brilliant and beautiful. As might naturally be expected, the family relations were not of the pleasantest character; and at last, sorrowful circumstances, impossible for that child to avert, drove her from her unnatural grandmother to take refuge with a stranger; and that stranger—that protector—that friend—was—"

"Cousin Tom," exclaimed Mrs. Evesham; and then added with mendacious, bitter scorn, "and the parentless waif was Electra Rutherford."

"The unfortunate lady was our noble cousin, Electra Pemberton, then bearing the name of 'Electra Rutherford,' to prevent her grandmother from legally confining her, in her home, after she had wounded and insulted her. Electra has a life-estate in the 'Hall,' as a residence while she remains single; and should she marry, and present a male heir to the line,

the estate would never be mine. I have written to your cousin 'Tom' to apprise her, and Mrs. Dudley also, of their unexpected happiness."

Mr. Evesham spoke in a firm, decided tone.

"And do you mean to tell me that you intend to *attempt* palming this ridiculous stuff—nonsense—upon sensible people? Do you suppose that such a flimsy subterfuge as *this*, will induce me, as your wife, to yield my home here to that *creature*—to that offspring of the *canaille*—with the belief that she is a patrician? Never! never! NEVER! I defy you! I will combat against it to the death! You never can—you never shall succeed!"

Wrought up to almost shrieking frenzy, she rose from her recumbent position, and with a crimson spot upon her cheek stood defiantly before her husband.

"Think you I am blind? Think you I am dead to human impulses? I know you love this woman! I have heard you murmur her name in your slumbers! I have held in my open palm the miniature of her you have painted from memory! Ay! you need not clasp your hand over your heart so suddenly! I know you wear it as a talisman; and, doubtless, if the viscus itself was examined, it would show this girl, like a second Correggia—a mirror which reflected only her own image. I take all your will and marriage business *ad valorem*. But mark me! whenever you attempt to put that woman in this house, I will show you—"

"What?"

Mr. Evesham's voice rang out with the clear reso-

nance of an octave trumpet ; and he caught her arm as she was about to pass him.

"I will show you the hell within my heart !" she hissed between her closed teeth.

The man was horrified—shocked. His grasp fell away from her, and with a jeering laugh she passed from the library.



CHAPTER XXV.

NOW it was brought about he never quite understood himself ; but Mr. Evesham, against his own volition, found the Hall the "retreat" and rendezvous for all the gay "fashionables" within the circuit of his London acquaintance. His own heart, aching with its horrible sense of desolation, still throbbed in keenest pity for the sorrows of his wife, or rather what he believed to be her sorrows ; and he could no longer resolutely oppose her unnatural desire for gayety and a ceaseless whirl of fashionable frivolities, when he entertained the supposition that she was fleeing from her poignant regret at discovering herself to be unloved by him. How little he comprehended her nature when he believed she—with a "gay world" beckoning her to a feast of enjoyment which, like the fabled lotus of the Nile, teaches the wanderer to forget his home—could sit down to weep over the broken image of her love which she had erected within the penetralia of her heart !

She was jealous as Gulbeyez, and the bitterness of her indignation against beautiful, innocent Electra amounted almost to passion. But it was not a jealousy prompted by love. It was simply the gangrene of wounded vanity, that her husband should not find her so irresistible that disloyalty to her charms would be

impossible. Woman's heart is a deep and wonderful mystery, and it is not for the world, with the presumption of a Dædalus, to attempt to solve it by a process of metaphysical or philosophical investigation. Dædalus was ingenious artist enough to make the labyrinth of Crete, but the intricacy of a woman's emotions would be a riddle which I question if Ædipus himself could solve. In unhappiness of the heart they are seldom faithful to themselves! In the hour of physical or social trials they stand forth in the arena magnanimous, unflinching—nothing sordid is mingled with their enthusiasm; but let a woman's heart once resign itself to the sway of vanity, and she is already as irredeemably lost as if she trod the red-hot tessellations of the Vulcanian regions. No "Eden-born motives," no noble surroundings, no lofty altitudes, can her soul harbor or appreciate. Thenceforth she is a creature whose debasing passions will cast her from any exalted position she may occupy or may have striven to attain. And of all errors into which she may fall, this love of flirtation, this contemptible vanity which would gratify itself at the cost of the purest and most ennobling emotions of which the heart is capable, is most defamatory to her character as a wife, a mother, or a woman. She makes herself the puppet for a mocking multitude; she blights and degrades herself by a contemptible assumption of affection which she does not in reality entertain; she pollutes the altars of love and friendship with the ashes of a dead heart; she sets an example of evil to the sweet, fresh natures about her

which will doubtless beguile many into a like commission of folly—which, after all, terminates in mortification, chagrin, repentance, and regret. Yet at this shrine of pollution Mrs. Evesham bowed herself down an humble votary, and the sin of her beguilement reared its serpent crest above her.

Her very dearest friend was Mrs. Victor Hardinge (formerly Mrs. Baird, though this fact was unknown), that Circe of passion, against whose adamant heart every good principle was shivered into atoms. To this woman—this *lusus naturæ*—then, who had deserted her husband and home to follow the fortunes of a man who adored her for her beauty, and whom she tolerated for his wealth, and tyrannized over or petted as the whim possessed her, very much as a wary spider entraps a fly into its deadly meshes ere it strikes its venom at the root of life;—to this woman, wholly incapable of pure friendship or deep emotion, devoid of all religious impulses, or faith in the inherent goodness of humanity—to this woman, of all others, Fanny turned for comfort and consolation in the imagined sorrow of her life. I say, imagined, for she had never, until now, regarded her husband otherwise than as a piece of property which her beauty had purchased. One evening in August, the ladies were reclining *tête-à-tête* on a luxurious pile of velvet cushions, in Fanny's boudoir. Now this boudoir, in its way, was a fit home for a houri; it was a voluptuous paradise; it was a veiled temple of sensuous repose and languid beauty. Carpet of downy, yielding richness, stretched beneath the foot; velvet-

draped windows, in purple and gold, shut out the light, or rather allowed it to glide in softened and subdued as the smile of a saint; luxurious cushions, and deep-armed chairs, whose ease were lost in dreamy shadows, were strewn around in artistic confusion; delicious narcotic aroma from rarest exotics, pendent from the walls in silver-chased baskets, weighed upon the senses; and the air pulsed with the rich æolian strains of a music-box, hidden away in some dim retreat, and the tinkling drip of the tambour *talla*, outside the windows. The atmosphere was amber-lighted—the stillness so intense as to be painful in the fragrance and voluptuousness of the scene—only broken, as it was by the soft murmur of musical voices, speaking as if half-lulled into the dream-land of perfect repose. Mrs. Evesham wore a haggard, pettish look, as she related her trials; but Mrs. Hardinge was more beautiful than ever before. Her form was more rounded and voluptuous in its graceful outlines. Her eyes were fuller of dreams, and a richer sunshine lay in the meshes of her golden, luxuriant hair.

Mrs. Evesham was talking—

“But, dear Mary, you have not half an idea what a will he has; he is so resolute, so firm, so passionate, that I half tremble at the thought of defying him.”

“Pshaw! show a man that you fear him, if you want a cold-blooded hero at the head of your household; and defy him with the passion of a panther, if you would be free!” replied Mrs. Hardinge, in a tone of excitement quite unusual.

“But, above all this, Mary, I have been raised to fear scandal. And if I cast myself into a flirtation with Eval Duval, what will the world say?” asked Mrs. Evesham, anxiously.

“The world (by that you mean the women, for they do the gossiping) will, no doubt, hold up its hands and exclaim, in a voice hollow as Hamlet’s,

“‘She leaves a name at which the world turns pale,
To point a moral or adorn a tale,’”

replied Mrs. Hardinge, with a mellow laugh.

“But for my part, Mrs. Evesham, I should only consult myself and my own emotions in any line of conduct I chose to pursue. *Should*, do I say? I *do* so! It is well the past has not a tongue; and oh, were it a woman’s! Do not deem me harsh, dear lady; I have not jostled along with the world you so fear without learning its frailties. Few women entertain love or friendship whom you do not flatter. You must either be submissive to their opinions or on the *qui vive* for their ‘small-talk.’ I confess I would rather have their slander than make them great by my suffrage. Leave your husband to me regarding this new passion, or rather old, if I may believe your jealousy, and I will whisper a little story in his ear, which, if it does not cure him of his folly, and restore him to you, will at least blind him to the belief in woman’s love and purity again. Ah! Mrs. Evesham, you are stabbed at the thought of your husband’s inconstancy. But the wound will heal, and by and by time will erase even the scar.”

She spoke with gleaming eyes and erect chin, as she

raised herself from her reclining position, and in all the regal splendor of her matured beauty sat beside her friend. From the tips of her jewelled fingers to her satin slippers, from her gem-wreathed hair to the sweep of her royal robes, from the false heart pulsing its crimson swell to the gleam of her blazing eyes, she looked every inch an irresistible Circe, who allured to destroy.

Mrs. Evesham gazed upon her; and while she realized that the glittering coils of the serpent were around her, she felt herself powerless to resist their deadly folds, and could only gasp:

"Anything—all things—so that Electra Rutherford's supremacy is destroyed."

"Ah, ha!" laughed Mrs. Hardinge, under her perfumed breath, "she was doomed at the hour of her birth!"

While yet they conversed, the velvet drapery which divided this tasty Oriol from the hall parted, and Mr. Evesham, cold and stern, and almost as pulseless as an *alto rilievo* in stone, accompanied by Mr. Eval Duval, stood before them.

"Ladies," he said, in his curtliest tones, "your presence is required among the guests in the saloon."

They both rose. Mrs. Hardinge with a suave bow accepted his proffered arm, passing into the larger gilded and lighted hall. And Mr. Eval Duval lingered but a moment to, unseen, press Fanny's beautiful hand to his lips.

"A hand that kings might envy him,
Tiny, rose-lined, lily-fair."

CHAPTER XXVI.



AND can you testify to a *personal* knowledge of these facts?"

"I can."

The voice which replied to the agitated question of Mr. Evesham, was clear and sweet as the chime of a silver bell. He looked upon the calm, cold face, so full of beauty, and apparently passionless as a statue's, which bent toward his shoulder, and then turned away from it with a groan, but spoke never a word.

"Does it pain you so much, then, Mr. Evesham? Have you lived all these years, and only just now learned the bitter lesson that beauty is oftener a mantle with which to smother virtue, than one to adorn it? Alas for your sorrow, if this is your *initiative*!"

Again the graceful head was bowed, and Mrs. Hardinge (for it was she) sighed so deeply, so plaintively, that Mr. Evesham somehow felt that she could comprehend his great grief, and was so drawn from his usual reserve as to confide to her his past life. Such was her control over her own emotion, that even when he showed her his uncle's letter, the color did not waver on her cheek, and her lips were calm and peaceful as if the Lord's Prayer had just been whispered over them. And yet this same woman had loved that dead man—had adored him—and had even so far abandoned the

straight path of prudence and modesty as to openly avow it to him, in the most maddening accents of despair; and more, she had been *rejected*—gently and nobly, it is true, because his heart was another's—but nevertheless rejected! And at the thought *Revenge* was burned in characters of undying heat upon her writhing soul. Hate was veined through all her rich blood; and through the innocent she gratified each insatiable passion.

With pretended regret she confided to Mr. Evesham her knowledge of "Electra Dudley's offspring," of her "duplicity and unpardonable conduct in attempting to inveigle Mr. McDowell into a flirtation," and absolutely *proposing* to Mr. Hardinge to keep trysts with him in the park at Clifton, and of the promptness with which Mr. McDowell dismissed her from his service, and forbade her even bidding good-bye to his children.

"And what became of her after that?" asked Mr. Evesham, mournfully.

"Heaven only knows! Yes—it strikes me now that I saw her after that, dressed very gaudily and elaborately, playing 'head-saleswoman' in a variety-store in B——."

"Great God!"

Lynn Evesham turned away from Mrs. Hardinge and strode to and fro like a caged lion; she all the while regarding him with the calm consciousness of power gleaming in her beautiful eyes. At last he paused before her, a great resolution regnant upon his

bold, broad, matchless brow, and said in a hollow voice of agonized despair:

"If this girl then has so much changed (and I have no right to doubt your assertion), she has wandered farther from the 'straight and narrow path' than I have hitherto deemed it possible for a woman who ever trod in virtuous 'lines' to do. Her purity and innocence were not assumed when I knew her—and oh, my God, loved her! And by that love, by that all-absorbing passion which to this day, to this hour, fills my soul for her and her only, I swear I will find her, fulfil my uncle's dying request, and redeem her!"

Bending, he caught the jewelled fingers of Mrs. Hardinge to his lips, and releasing them again, would have left her, but she detained him, murmuring in a tone in which admiration, sympathy, and regret were exquisitely blended:

"Are you confident you can accomplish this, my poor, generous-hearted friend? Do you not fear she has fallen too far for redemption?"

"I can at least trust in God to aid and strengthen me in my good work. I remember—"

'Twas through temptation that our gracious Lord,
The mediator between God and men,
Reached down the hand of sympathetic love
To meet the grasp of lost humanity.'

I shall refuse to recognize repulse," replied Mr. Evesham, with noble firmness.

"Take care that you are not paid in the currency of disappointment for your trouble. I trust, however,

that you may succeed, for she was a rarely beautiful girl. Least of all do I desire to check your aspirations or dampen your enthusiasm by bringing in the coffin at the feast, and predicting the hollowness of the results your exertions will command. I cannot conceal from myself, however, that I owe you a warning against that supreme faith of yours in the potentiality of human resolves. Admiring the fresh, free heart which refuses to discern repulse; recognizing better even than you yourself can recognize, the potency of high endeavor and staunch devotion to the attainment of high ends, I must still defer to the teaching of my own experience and observations, rather than to your hopeful logic. I myself have attempted the art of redemption—and, *upon Electra*; and here I tell you honestly, my dear friend, it was remorse which prompted your uncle to leave that certificate of marriage with you—remorse which prompted him to recognize his illegitimate child as legal offspring; and it was his supreme faith in your Bayard nature that induced him to request the 'Hall' as a residence for her."

"A Bayard?" said Mr. Evesham, in reply, with a little curl of scorn chasing sorrow from his expressive mouth. "My dear madam, Bayards do not exist in this age; indeed, I doubt if a Bayard, such as we read of, ever did exist. All men are immersed in selfishness of a depth greater or less, and the question, as I understand it, is, not how much we lack of being absolutely perfect, but how much we rise above the plane of the absolutely imperfect. I do not call these ideas

of mine cynicism, but theories growing out of a calm and philosophical view of human nature, as it exists materially, and not in books. I am astonished that you, after gaining so much of experience in other matters of life, should still impute the qualities of a Bayard to any man living. Wait a few years longer, however, and then ask yourself whether I have to-day underestimated mankind. Experience will afford you the strictest and most convincing test of this thing. In regard to my dear cousin, I will do my duty; and if I fail, God will know full well my heart was in the right place. Life has such strange mutations! My uncle left a dying request for me to protect and provide for his child. Whether that child is legitimate or otherwise, it cannot move me from what I esteem to be a sacred duty. I can never blind myself to the possibility of having to ask of others what present misfortunes sometimes force others to ask of me. I believe that—

"The drying up of a single tear has more
Of honest fame, than shedding seas of gore."

Who knows but that on my own death-bed, the image of a child of mine, unloved, unprovided for, unprotected, may haunt me! I shall do my duty!"

This time the woman, shamed within her own soul for her narrowmindedness, made no attempt to detain him—and with a polite bow he passed from her presence; but when the echo of his firm footstep died along the hall, she set her teeth together, with a little wolfish snap, and hissed:

"I would at least have saved him from a deep, un-

dying disgrace, if he had condemned *her* child ; but not having done so, he must—he *shall* drink the cup of life's bitterness to the lees—to the lees !”

Her head sank forward on her breast, and for half an hour her reverie was undisturbed. Then a fond hand rested upon her brow—a tender voice whispered in her ear :

“Mary chérie, have you forgotten that this hour was promised to Victor ?”

Driving the dark shadows which had risen from heart to brow, and defaced its whiteness, she looked up and smiled brightly, as she took the arm of Mr. Hardinge, and with a graceful step, keeping time to his own, went off to take her afternoon ride.

When the bland breeze of heaven was kissing her snowy temples, gleaming out from the bands of golden hair, and crested with a black velvet cap—did no thought of a dark-browed, grief-stricken man—did no vision of a sweet face trembling with the traces of tears obtrude themselves ? God alone knows ! The lovely garden of her heart was overgrown with rank, luxuriant weeds. It was neglected, utterly ; only the blackest of passions were fructuated in its soil. No rill of sympathy flowed through it to water the tiniest floweret ; no tear from her eye ever fell upon it ; every fountain of feeling was choked up—

“Alas for the rarity
Of Christian charity,
Under the sun !”

Hood's was a rhyme full of essential reason, and

based upon blunt facts. Long should we hesitate before sacrificing to impulsive feeling, however strong it may be, a virtue so rare. Enthusiasm should never cause us to consider dispassionate investigation, with a view to justice to all, and charity full and diffusive, as heresies to feeling, and the (pseudo) religion of impulse. And yet it does, and actions contrary to these are generally considered marks of eccentricity ! We are always pertinaciously ready to demand a dispassionate charity for ourselves ; but how many are ready to yield the same to their neighbors—although justice to them would in nowise detract from the justification we would naturally desire to have given to our own peculiar feelings and ideas ? The problems of fairness and tolerance are broad ; but how many agree upon them ? How many, rather than occupy a firm basis thereon, would prefer to differ on the ultimate questions of right and wrong involved in all the unfortunate affairs of life ! How few of us remember that we cannot afford to be unjust, even to our enemies, if we would claim for ourselves integrity and a sense of honor ! For, if our grounds of enmity are well taken, the responsibility of the enemy is sufficiently great without adding that which false charges would create ; while, if the grounds are erroneous, we are only adding falsity to falsity. What a blessing would it be for us all if we could rise above the passions aboriginal, so as to be charitable—and, if facts justify the charity, just !

“There's not a crime
But takes its proper change out still in crime,
If once rung on the counter of this world.
Let sinners look to it.”

CHAPTER XXVII.

SPRING! And once more Electra Rutherford looked out on the world and smiled. The twilight shadows were creeping in amid the dusty and smoky gloom of the streets; but Electra, from her attic-window, still beheld, soft as the light in a half-forgotten dream of beauty, the purple hills—the wide horizon, where the rose and gold of sunset flushed—while the moon shone in this light like a broken ring of silver. The leaves of the lofty China-trees rustled, and their feathery, graceful blossoms drooped languidly beneath the kisses of the evening wind. Now and then the chirp of a mother-bird—and always the mellow croak of the mottled frog—pulsed the air with a sound of peace and contentment peculiarly soothing to a wearied frame and anxious brain. Electra suffered from both these afflictions. Her illness had altered her very much. Day after day she would lie upon her couch, oppressed by vague phantoms of the past. Everything in life wore the dun hue of a voiceless despair. Life, love, ambition, hope—all faded. The censorious world had crushed down her heart until it was petrified into a flinty substance which censoriousness and slander could no longer wound. Those she had allowed herself to love were estranged. Beneath God's sky she was desolate—forsaken—alone.

While she sat there, low and plaintive the voice of memory sang to her as if each sound trembled with an unshed tear of sorrow. Back, back to the Cridivana meads of childhood, that sweet song bore her. All the little wants and cravings for love which she had felt when lying with her elfin face pressed amid the azure and golden violet beds, and the feathery blue grass stretching its prairie beauty over the "lap of the dim old forest," thrilled her again—yearnings and longings which were but germs of the untrodden years; all the wrongs—the heart-stabs—the sorrows—all the pangs and bitter tears which had marked the course of her development at the "Grange," all the hopes and dreams which were to add glory to her brow—withered—dead—the harvest swept by—the golden grain trodden into the mire of worldliness; all the wonderful sweetness of her heart crushed, her character perverted, her motives destroyed, her friends estranged or separated beyond recall by widening time and dreary distance—nothing was left now, it seemed to her, but to die. Ah! she had waited long, she had borne suffering, toil, as few women are capable of doing; but it was not the time to faint when the glory of the final goal threw its light over her advancing footsteps; it was not the time to allow her heart to fail her when God's smile was beaming through the breaking clouds, and the angels were whispering around her:

"He probed to save. He chastened in love!"

William Hayden entered the room with a glad step, and kneeling beside the sweet convalescent, he put his

arms up, with affectionate familiarity, about her waist, and with love-beaming eyes looked into her face.

With a blush, which she strove in vain to conquer, she laid her hand on his forehead, asking :

"Dear William, what is it that makes you so happy this evening—you who have been so moody of late?"

"Electra! my darling Electra! I almost fear to tell you, but I never, in the whole course of my life, have been so madly, deliriously happy as I am now. Can you bear it?"

"Bear what, dear cousin? You forget how strong I am. Yes, tell me!"

"You remember what I told you of our friend Mrs. West?"

"Yes."

"And that she persisted in calling you Miss Pemberton?"

"My father! my father!" gasped the young girl, leaning forward with clasped hands and expanded eyes.

"You have found him?"

"Yes; yet for you there remains now only the dust of his earthly form, for he sleeps within his narrow home. He died last month."

No word escaped the quivering lips save—

"Mother?"

"Was, and is all your pure soul told you—an angel in heaven!"

William Hayden feared she would faint, she turned so perfectly pallid; but she did not, although her head drooped on her breast, and her hands fell listlessly

apart. She was thinking of Lynn Evesham, and how, had he acted otherwise, she might have been happy; how now, beneath the cross of a loveless life, she would look with eyes of tender trust to the good God who always remembered her, and that no murmur of regret should ever escape her lips. She was possessed of a boon whose wealth could not be measured—her mother's unblemished honor. A crown of glory decked her brow which might never fade—an untarnished name. Ah! in hers the essence of witchery pulsed!

William's trembling voice interrupted her reverie.

"Electra darling, would you hear the letter? It is from Mr. Lynn Evesham. It has more news than the simple discovery of your father. You are an heiress to one of the oldest of England's estates. Your father was Claude Pemberton Evesham. And here is another communication from Dr. Brandenburg, which enclosed Mr. Lynn Evesham's."

"Read them to me—Or stay, you light the lamp and I will read them myself. Indeed, dearie, I am strong enough!" she said, trying to smile, when she saw his hesitating manner, as she held out her hand.

In spite of her terrible agitation, the letters were read, and she learned that she was all her cousin had asserted; and something which equally startled her—Lynn Evesham was her first cousin; and at the thought which flashed through her brain of her vow in the past to marry the man who first discovered her legitimate parentage, a crimson flush rose to her brow. Oh! those free bright hours, of the vanished years, when

she had given her untutored heart to him, when the sound of his voice could make her very life-blood bound! Would those days ever come again? Would she ever roam with him again beneath the beech-trees' spreading shade? Would they ever wander over the sunny pastures together, listening to the fairy tales which love and hope were whispering in each other's hearts?

William Hayden, kneeling beside her, watched the varying emotions chasing each other in quick succession over the sweet face, turned to the deepening twilight with a glow of inspiration and joy lighting every feature, and his great heart bounded, as if it would break its confines and lie pulsing at her feet. But this was not the hour to mingle his passion with her pure delight, and putting a strong curb upon his inclination, he remained silent.

At last she turned to him, saying, in a clear, cold tone:

"Cousin William, we will leave B—— to-morrow."

"You are not able to travel," he replied, in an anxious voice.

"Yes, I am. Delay would only make me ill again. I wish to go to-morrow."

"Whither?"

"Westward." Then after a pause, as she saw a sudden light spring to his eyes—"Not to the 'Grange'—never there! I shall simply *write* to our grandmother—but to 'Beechmoor'!—the home of my best, my long-cherished friend, Dr. Thomas Brandenburg."

"Your best friend, Electra? Do you mean all you

say? Do you mean that this expression of endearment—the tenderest—the most earnest—the most purely passionate a woman's pure lips could frame for a man she loves and admires, belongs to—to *another than myself*? Who but *I*, can be, dares be, your 'best friend'? *I*, who have lived for you—*I*, who have been a wanderer for you—have deserted home and the hearts that held me dear, worshipping your image ever and only. Speak! who is this man, this 'best,' this 'long-cherished friend?' How 'long cherished?'"

He paused for a reply, but the young girl had lowered her head in her hands, with a gesture of despair, and remained silent. Always high-spirited, hot-blooded, passionate, he never paused to question the right or propriety of his reproaches; he only realized, with a sense of sudden, overpowering horror, that any other man than himself claimed even the *shadow* of her lightest thought. Who was this person to whom Electra first turned in her great joy for sympathy? And yet his name was signed at the close of the letter which that snowy hand clasped with such a lingering touch of tenderness to her pallid face. In his agony of suspense, he almost groaned aloud. Rising from his place beside her, he stood with folded arms, engrossed in moody abstraction. It was almost fearful to watch the convulsion of his features, to see the color dying out from his cheeks, and his lips, even, grow bloodless in his strong heart's attempt to assert itself, and his equally firm will controlling, subduing, crushing it. At last he spoke in deep, measured tones:

"Electra, I may seem to exhibit a great deal of unnecessary passion about a matter in which you no doubt consider I have no concern; but you are mistaken. My life, my happiness, are centred in you; and I love you so wholly, so madly, so jealously, that I would, if I could, deny the sight of your loveliness even to the day. The sun's smiles, the wind's kisses, the breath of flowers, make me miserable, because you love them. I have worshipped you thus for years. I sought you when nameless—deserted; I loved you—adored you. You fled the 'Grange' before I could tell you this; but surely you were not ignorant of my emotions; and if so, you have at least read my passion by the light of my eyes, in these weeks that I have watched above you! Electra, be my wife!"

Still no reply, but the hands screening the sweet face trembled with the deepest agitation, and in the momentary stillness which ensued, they heard the throbbing of each other's hearts distinctly. The white-heat of passion had risen. He caught her hands and forcibly drew them from her face, asking, hoarsely:

"Have you no answer for me?"

"Oh, Cousin William!"

She could say no more, but the look of terror and sadness she cast upon him told what words could scarce have done.

"You love this man, then? This Dr. Brandenburg?"

"No—oh, no! To him, as to you, I have said, '*I cannot*;' and he is still my friend."

"Your *best* friend," he said bitterly.

"Ah! if I could only tell you how good—how kind—"

He interrupted her with sudden heat:

"You love another, then—this new cousin—Lynn Evesham!"

Why did the hot blood bound to her face, crimsoning it with blushes? Why did the waxen lids droop over the modest eyes?

"I am answered," he said, after another pause, his tones seeming as very gasps of agony; "but is it irrevocable? You know I believe woman capable of but *one love*—the first. And did you not love me at the 'Grange?'"

Electra rose from her chair and suddenly cast herself at his feet, exclaiming:

"Never! And oh! Cousin William! God witness I strove not to love him! He married a woman he did not love—in his despair—and then I crushed the thought of him from my heart. But he is like the memory of the dead whom we have loved: to me he will exist forever. It is sinful, it is wicked; I know it! But the low-toned music of his voice falls ever in mystical echoes around me. The touch of his hand, the clasp of his arm, the thrill of his lips, is ever upon me! I had hoped he had grown less madly dear, for I strove with unearthly strength to rive the bonds with which he bound me. But oh! William, William! it was to him—to *him*—that my heart in its first moment of joy, sped—past its prison-bars! Forgive me! forgive me!"

The imperial crown bowed before him, and her face was buried in the dust.

"Electra!"

The strong voice failed. The man could say no more. Springing to his outstretched arms an instant later, she lay sobbing on his breast. And while tears—the clarified blood of his heart—dropped their salt upon her sunny head, he murmured:

"My heart may break, but it can never change!
Ah! Electra,

'Love is no love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove.
Oh, no! it is an ever fixed mark,
That looks on tempests, and is never shaken.'

I have offered at the shrine of your loveliness and worth the sunshine of my boyhood's love, and the deeper, fiercer, firmer passion of my maturity. Both, alas! in vain! I have yearned for your smiles as a fainting twilight yearns for stars. I have panted for your love as a hart pants for sparkling brooks. But in vain. To me there comes neither the silver light of your smile, nor the cooling peace, nor the quiet balm of your love! The night-dews have fallen in darkness, and no Aurora gleams in opaline light from afar! I once swore that I would follow you to the ends of the earth—to the grave—before another should win you. I was mad. I never paused to remember that your heart was your own, and that you might bestow its glorious wealth upon another."

With passionate kisses pressed on lips, brow, and eyes, he tore himself from her, and sprang from the room, and down the stairs, as though fleeing the wraith of "The Wrath to Come."

"William! William!"

But the walls alone heard the eager, pleading cry which parted the pallid lips of the gentle orphan girl. He was gone.

The sun had risen, and the glory and flush of early dawn had passed into the clear light of a cloudless spring morning, ere Electra opened her sad eyes from her deep and dreamless sleep, to see Mrs. McDowell bending over her. Her surprise was so intense, language failed her.

"Have you no welcoming word? My little Allie fancied you would receive me differently."

Mrs. McDowell laid her hand with a caressing touch on the short, curling hair (for Electra's wealth of brown braids were martyrs to the scissors in her illness) of the girl's graceful head, and looked earnestly in the beautiful face, settling now into the hard lines which ever heralded the memory of her wrongs. Her calm, earnest eyes, her slow, measured tone, caused Mrs. McDowell's heart to sink within her breast.

"Madam, I presumed my exit from 'Clifton' precluded all ideas of welcome, in any case, as it did recognition. You perhaps are not aware that you are acting under the ban of your husband's displeasure. As to Allie (here her voice wavered with emotion), we will not discuss her; indeed, I am not able. To

what fortunate occurrence am I indebted for this interview?"

She raised herself to a half-recumbent attitude, supporting her head with her hand, meanwhile gazing steadily in the lady's face, flushing and paling with agitation and excitement.

Mrs. McDowell was a haughty, self-possessed woman, but there was no such thing practicable as regaining composure under that battery of glances, except by a plain and concise confession of the truth, and therefore, without pausing to control the emotion trembling in her voice, she began:

"Circumstances were all against you when Mr. McDowell dismissed you from his service. You had been misrepresented and maligned by a woman whom I believed blameless in her own life as the sunshine is pure, and yet who proved herself foul with the darkest blot of sin which can stain woman's character. With her adulterous smiles and deceit, she forsook her husband and home, and fled with the man who betrayed her—Victor Hardinge—her accomplice in wreaking all your sorrows."

"Mrs. Baird!" exclaimed Electra, excitedly, sitting upright in bed.

"Now, *Mrs. Hardinge*, as she pleases to entitle herself since the Divorce Court has granted her husband a divorce on the grounds of her fall."

A pause. Then in a sadder tone she spoke again:

"After you left, Allie's health rapidly failed her, and her constant pleading cry was for 'Electra.' Mr.

McDowell advertised for you, but we received no replies."

"I was ill, or I should have gone," said Electra, tenderly.

"So we learned subsequently, through your cousin, Mr. Hayden."

"Yes?"

The girl's voice was sweet, inquisitive, and her glance was one of unfeigned surprise.

"You see," continued Mrs. McDowell, "the winter passed, and about two weeks ago a letter came to Clifton for you, directed to my husband's care. Again he advertised, and your cousin answered the note *in propria persona*. Not a cloud was left overshadowing you. He told us this Mr. Hardinge had deceived and inveigled you into the tryst—to mislead us—under the pretence that he knew your father, and would discover your existence to him; and also of your trials at Madame Dubois's variety-store. The Madame was attached to you, and regretted her conduct terribly after she learned of your illness. It seems your mother boarded with her for some months previous to your birth. She asked me to-day, when I stopped to make some purchases, if I believed you would receive her apologies—"

"No, Madam. That woman acknowledged my superiority, yet at the moment when she could trample me in the dust, she did so with as much venom as if I had been an adder!"

Again a pause—while the hard lines deepened on the cold, gray face of the injured girl—then:

"Allie pleads for 'Electra!' Will she come?"

The gloved hand of Mrs. McDowell rested on the thin, feverish fingers interlaced and clasped upon the bent brow of the invalid.

"Mrs. McDowell, my name, as you know, is not Rutherford, but legally, Electra Pemberton. I am a legitimate child, and need no longer assume a name to hide my mother's error, or rather supposed error,—for angel now as she is, she was not less pure when she wore her garb of earthliness."

"I congratulate you, my child, Heaven bear witness, from the inmost depths of my heart! How did you receive such pleasant knowledge—from what source I mean?"

"From my cousin, Mr. Lynn Evesham. He wrote to my dear friend Doctor Brandenburg the particulars, and the letter containing them was the one left at Clifton, and only received last evening."

"Indeed, my child, do I sympathize with you in your joy!"

Mrs. McDowell leaned forward as she spoke and imprinted a warm kiss upon the sweet lips, quivering with their deep emotion, adding, after a moment's hesitation and a rising blush:

"Of-course our hope of retaining you in our home as governess cannot now be realized. But you will at least go to see Allie, when the pale, patient darling yearns so for a glimpse of you—will you not? And, even though you cannot forget, you will promise to forgive the past?"

Mrs. McDowell seemed irresolute and anxious.

"My dear friend, never mention it again,

'Let the dead past bury its dead.'

It is with the future that we have to do," said Electra, smiling brightly with a sudden generous impulse.

Soon after, Mrs. McDowell rose to go, saying:

"I have some purchases to make for the children before I return to 'Clifton.' I will be engaged about an hour. Shall I call for you as I return? May I do so?"


"Mrs. McDowell, you may, if you only will," answered the young girl, gently.

And so it happened that when darkness once more let fall its sombre veil over the sleeping earth, and the moon, with her galaxy of stars, lit the night-hours with her smile, the great family carriage of the McDowells rolled in under the larches, and paused before the stately hall at Clifton: the portals swung wide, and glad greeting was given to the wanderer returned.

"The drift of the Maker is dark, an Isis hid by a veil:
Who knows the ways of the world, how God will bring them about?"



CHAPTER XXVIII.

H, my darling, my darling, I am sorry for you!"

Alice McDowell murmured these words through fast-falling tears, as she wound her arms about Electra Pemberton's neck, and pressed kisses of sympathy and consolation upon the pale, set features, receiving as her only reward a sad, heart-broken smile from the trembling lips, and a gentle glance from the hopeless, lonesome-looking eyes.

"Oh! only try to receive this chastening in a more humble spirit; try to believe it was sent in love! Do not lose your faith in God's mercy; try to bear it humbly! And oh, Electra, pray for faith and strength!"

"Wherefore pray? *I must bear.* This is the epitome of all human life."

The girl's lips writhed bitterly.

"But the 'crown,' darling! Remember it, and be meek and lowly in heart. Look upward! for above you is the sunshine of Heaven, and in its radiance God will crown you, darling, and give unto your heart the peace that surpasseth our knowledge," said Alice, gently.

"Ah! I am already crowned—with sorrow!" replied Electra, as she unwound the fond arms from their caressing; and rising, stepped softly toward a bed

where the rigid outlines of a human form were visible beneath the glistening linen shrouding-sheet which lay smoothly over it. Drawing the folds aside, she gazed upon the cold, dead face of her cousin—William Hayden. It wore the same pure look she had last seen upon it in life.

"Yet the sorrow that she gave him still had left its weary trace,
And a meek and saintly sadness dwelt upon his pallid face."

Alice turned and left the orphan alone with her dead, closing the door softly after her as she went out.

And Electra, falling upon her knees, hid her face in the linen shroudings. The air was blazing with a hazy gold, and the purple glories of twilight were softly folding themselves over the tallest peaks of the Kittatinny Mountains, and the steeples and spires gleamed in the light, lending almost a glory to the quiet city of Harrisburg. To the east the blue rippling Susquehanna stretched out its arms from beneath its magnificent bridges, like a child at play, and now the long wash of its waves upon the shore came to the mourner's ear like the surge and sweep of a funeral train. And down the street pattered the care-free feet of a troop of children. Their merry voices and dewy-lipped laughter grated against her nerves. The strangely fair beauties of the evening hour were not soothing to her; it seemed like a half-forgotten dream that she had ever smiled, and a leap into the future long as life to imagine she could ever do so again. Drop by drop the marah-cup had been drunk, and still a relentless hand

pressed the lees to her quivering lips ! And she shrank from it, moaning and wild, as she knelt thus beside the guardian of her early, wayward childhood, and realized that he had passed from her forever—that memory was all that was left for her. How she yearned now for the sound of his voice—the light of his eyes—the ever-caressing touch of his hand ! But, alas ! across that tide his last farewell had been waved. Passing years, she knew, would soothe her present poignant grief when she recognized her own helplessness, but her sense of loss would never die, for that loss was irreparable.

When William Hayden sprang away from his cousin, and out into the darkness, he was upon the verge of insanity. In all his dreams of happiness (and it was only in connection with her that he had dreamed of it at all) he had never entertained the idea that she could love another ; and now, when the knowledge burst upon him in its full force, his brain reeled, his very soul grew sick. He had loved her so long, he had loved her so well—for years he had anticipated the time when, overcoming all obstacles, he could address her by the hallowed name of “wife.” He had watched her growth from infancy to womanhood, and he knew her to be as pure and good and true in character as she was lovely in feature and in form. But William Hayden was a man of principle ; his sense of honor was lofty, his integrity unblemished by the predominance of a single passion ; and therefore when Electra prostrated herself at his feet and confessed her love for

another, no other course was left to him but to resign her wholly and entirely from that hour—at least in the *outward* semblance of his life, for in his heart he felt that her sway could never be less omnipotent than it was before this terrible knowledge fell like a blight upon him. How he endured his grief through the watches of that night he could not tell ; he only realized, in his stunned, half-demented state, that the light of day had never been so welcome to his lonesome eyes as when the first faint streaks of gray rising in the east announced the coming dawn. And yet he felt no interest in life. The unbroken quietude of the Libyan deserts, the gloom and darkness of moonless Amazonian solitudes, were more in consonance and congeniality with his despairing emotions than aught else could possibly be, save that he felt impelled to flee from himself ; and it is only in changing scenes that this miracle can be wrought. Some one has written, who understood the human heart and its necessities perhaps, that “sorrow is a kind of rust of the soul, which every new idea contributes in its passage to scour away. It is the putrefaction of stagnant life, and is remedied by exercise and motion.” Who among us but have bowed beneath the influence of this thought—that in crowds we can forget our grief—can shut out the light of haunting eyes—the smile of cold, scornful lips we love in defiance of ourselves—the perfect beauty of the calm faces of our “gone before” as we last saw them in life, or in the placid folds of a shroud ere they were consigned to their narrow houses in the silent city of the

dead? Who among us but hear low sighs, or fond, reproachful words echoing through our hearts, while, with dancing eyes and wanton, reckless glee, our lips "keep time" to the gay wit and wine and repartee and song in the gilded *salons* and draperied "reception-rooms," where the cold and careless meet? Whose lips have not breathed light troths while our hearts were breaking—breaking, in spite of dainty silken bowers, perfumed with the ever-burning incense from Love's censer—in spite of bright garlands and regal robes?

But, William Hayden, in his silent communion with his own soul, had darker, sadder, bitterer thoughts than even these, against which to contend. He had no bright memories to which he could turn. No; not even in the charming *abandon* of childhood had she willingly acknowledged, or received, his adulation and his love. Never once had she exhibited the slightest sign of warmth or emotion in her calm, cousinly regard for him. Looking back on it all now, he had not one word of reproach to offer, not one angry thought against her to lessen his admiration or cool the ardor of his affection.

All that day passed drearily enough for him. When he left her the evening previous with that last kiss and passionate farewell, he intended the separation to be a final one; but reviewing the occurrence with a somewhat calmer judgment, he realized that such a parting was unjust to her. He would see her once again; he must—*must* gaze once more upon her calm and holy face.

With his usual precipitancy of action, he turned down the street which led to her quiet home, and after a hurried walk, he stood upon the door-step. Should he enter? Already his hand had unwittingly pulled the bell, and Mrs. Wade answering it, said respectfully:

"Good-morning, Mr. Hayden; Miss Electra has gone to the country with Mrs. Aubin McDowell. But, will you walk in?"

Struck dumb by this sudden disappointment, he could not reply. He entered the hall, and being considered almost as a member of the household, he passed unquestioned up the flight of stairs to Electra's room. He turned the knob; he entered, and as the door swung heavily to after him, he sank overpowered into the nearest chair, and stared helplessly about him. Electra gone! After all, then, he might not meet her. Perhaps it was best so. Perhaps an interview would only have given her pain, and added another sting to his own torture. He would write her a letter, and tell her what he intended to speak. Going to the little table, which stood near the open window, with its fringed and snowy dimity cover, surmounted by a glass of fresh flowers, and her folded, neatly arranged *portefeuille*, he penned her a few hasty lines, and tossing them amid the other papers, he turned to retrace his steps, out to the busy world again, far away, oh! forever and forever from the hallowed precincts of the apartment of the only being beneath God's blue sky to whom he gave his undivided love. He paused. His lingering gaze took in all the minutiae which it might

never view again,—the snowy curtains, the light graceful chairs, though of the simplest Grecian pattern—the pure white drapery of the bed, where he had for many weeks watched over her in her terrible illness—the pattern of the ingrain carpet—the flowers, the flounce around the dressing-table, the bottles of medicine on the mantel—the painted pine *armoire*, with its half-open doors,—and lastly, swinging to the neck of her morning-dress, where she had tossed it, when preparing to go to “Clifton,” a jaunty black velvet bow. With trembling fingers, he unfastened it, and after repeatedly pressing it with passionate vehemence to his bloodless lips, he passed from the room with solemn, awed footsteps, as if leaving the consecrated house of the dead; and oh! was it *not* consecrated to him?

A week or two afterward, when Electra returned to prepare for her visit to the West, and to settle her indebtedness to her kind-hearted and considerate landlady, Mrs. Wade, ere she bade her farewell forever, as she hurriedly tossed out the papers from her portfolio, to find some required receipt, the sealed note from her Cousin William attracted her attention. Seizing it, she tore it open, and as she read, a tender, holy sadness veiled her sweet face.

And now, kneeling beside him, she drew it from her bosom, and reperused the lines with tearful trembling as a message from the dead; and her whole after-life was influenced by the words they contained:

“I came to say good-bye, Electra, my best-beloved,

before I turned from you and happiness forever; but you were absent with the friends of your heart. I have no reproach to offer for my unrequited love. I know you have done right to reserve your hand with your heart. It is miserable—maddening—to thus calmly write! Oh, my own—my very own—yes, let me say it once, for there is heaven in the sound! *My own Electra!* For me there is one consoling thought in my sorrow: However worthless my adoration may be in your estimation, it is a happiness for me to bestow it upon you! And yet another! My eye will be dimmed with many a tender thought of you, and age will have silvered my dark hair ere I again stand beside you. But you will never be absent from my heart one single moment. In the hush of night—on the bounding billows—in the far, far lands beyond the boundaries of my native shores and rolling seas—I will dream of and love you. In my exile, it will soothe and comfort me to think of you as being in the old home-place, lighting its gloom with your entrancing smile; and of your dear hands as soothing, and your presence cheering the declining years of our lonely relatives, as my misery forbids me to do. This is the last request I shall ever make—go to the Grange!

“Yours, always,
“W. H.”

“And it shall be gratified,” said Electra, rising, and pressing her lips to the cold, gray face of the peerless sleeper.

The accident which caused his death had happened only the day previous. He had, the week before, inadvertently "put up" at the same hotel in Richmond; and finding her name upon the "stranger's book," had lingered in the city until her departure, and then taken passage in the same westward train, that he might once more, unseen, feast his eyes upon her loveliness. She was travelling in company with the McDowells, who were to wait in Philadelphia until her return from Kentucky, when they would, from New York, set sail for Europe together—Electra to investigate her personal affairs, and the McDowells to benefit Alice's health, which still prostrated her, for hours at a time, upon a rack of untold suffering and debility.

The train had stopped at a station for the "passengers to dine." The excitement had passed, and each traveller sank back into that apathy which is a sure accompaniment to weary travel. On, through the distance, the iron monster plunged, breathing flame and fury from the very winds that kissed his rugged, ribbed frame. Suddenly a turn in the road—a moment later the shrill shriek of the engine—then a backward, rapid roll of the heavy wheels, and a pause.

"What is the matter?" asked a passenger; and the question passed from lip to lip, while curiosity sat eager-eyed and silent.

"A man killed!" was the reply returned; and the solemn words again passed from lip to lip, until they died away in a hushed whisper—"A man killed!"

Electra had listened to the question and reply with

anxious heart and bated breath—she scarce knew why. She wanted to cry out—to ask whose darling was dead now—but she dared not. Pressing her lips firmly together, she waited. An ominous silence pervaded the whole "train," broken only by the steady, heavy tramp of the men who bore the dead body to the baggage-car. They passed by the window near which she sat. With a pale, anxious face, she looked down on them; and an instant later, with a low moan, sank back lifeless on the shoulder of Mr. McDowell, who was sitting beside her.

"He was her lover."

"Her husband."

"Her brother."

Thus whispered the awed crowd to and fro, but all unheard by either Electra or her friends.

At Harrisburg the train had paused, and the dead man being identified by Mr. McDowell—he was resigned unto the care of his mourners. And then the crowd swept on as though that day's sun had not shone over a dead face and a stricken heart.

This is the way of the world. We are like the flowers of the field; to-day we are here nodding and smiling, full of life and beauty; to-morrow we are not, and the world moves on as if we had never been. To-day we are admired, our repartee and wisdom, our genius and grace is on every lip—admiration is in every eye, and we really think, like the buzzing fly on the wheel, that we aid the world in turning round; to-morrow we are laid in our narrow green-roofed houses, and no

carriage but the sexton's hearse ever thinks of stopping at or near our silent, echoless portals. No, no; the world cannot pause because *we* die—or remember us for this reason either. The sun will shine just as brightly on our graves, as it did when it brightened our brows, and the grass will creep and wave above us just as if the worm were not crawling in and out amid our ebon and gold braids, and yellow and chestnut curls, and the birds will sing over us—men will laugh and talk and smoke—children will patter and prattle, and women talk about their babies, and the “fashion,” just as though we had never been. True, one or two may hold our memories dear, and weep when they whisper our names; but it is oftenest that the dove is left to chant our requiems, and the night-dews to moisten our last resting-places, and the warm sunshine sleeping on our tombstones to smile with the thought that we are at peace.

William Hayden's death had been very sudden. He had been standing upon the platform, gazing at his beloved cousin, who was so utterly unconscious of his vicinity; and not anticipating danger, he was all ignorant of peril—listlessly leaning upon, without grasping the iron rail running the length of the form. The cars jostled at the sudden turn, and he was thrown to the earth, some twenty feet from the track, and his head striking a rock, his death was instantaneous; but, there was no marring of the manly beauty, save the blow on the temple, and that was hidden by the waving richness of the dark hair flowing carelessly over it.

At rest, at rest! No more longing for

“The far off, unattainable, and dim.”

No more passionate despair;—long dreary days, months, years.

“His palms are folded on his breast:

There is no other thing expressed,

But long disquiet merged in rest.”

All was peace. Not the uncertain peace of earth; but that which makes the world beyond the stars a sweet haven of peace for the weary soul. Thus was the last stroke of the shuttle of William Hayden's life given, and the fabric went forth into the storehouse of God, where it would be judged by a Judge above beguiling.

And so it was that when William Hayden was laid away to his last sleep, on the breast of his mother earth, and left alone with the night winds, and the soft rains of June, mourning and weeping a requiem above him, Electra gave her farewell kiss to Alice and her parents and the children, who loved her so, and went westward to the “Grange.”

With what a heavy heart she counted the lessening miles! With what eager, longing eyes, oft dimmed with fast-falling tears, she leaned out to catch the first familiar landmarks of the place where her childhood had lived and died!

And ah! with what a sickening of the soul she mounted the old, familiar steps, crossed the marble portico, and opening the door of the “family room,” beheld Mrs. Dudley sitting alone!—for the despoiler had not overlooked even one of his allotted victims.

The sunlight lay in broad bands of brightness on her silver hair, and the hard lines were all smoothed out from her proud, aged face. She was gazing tenderly on a flat, oval case of blue velvet she held in her white, withered hands. At last, pressing her finger upon a spring, the case opened, displaying a tinted photograph of her grandson—the already “dear redeemed.”

“Ah!” sighed the old lady, in feeble tones, “I wonder if he will not come to me now, when he learns that *she* is gone.”

“Grandmother!”

Electra spoke softly, as if fearful of startling her.

Mrs. Dudley looked up, at first inquisitively, and then sternly, as she recognized the features of her dead daughter in the sweet Spanish-faced beauty before her. A frown gathered darkly on her brow.

“Wherefore have you returned?”

If a latent spark of human tenderness for the stony creature had flashed in the warm heart of the impulsive girl, that question smothered it, and prompted her bitter and concise reply:

“I have come to bring you news of your dead darling—William Hayden.”

The old lady sprang forward—lifted up her arms:

“Just God!” she cried; and as a cold, gray wing swept past her, she fell forward on her face.

“The ways of Heaven are dark and intricate,
Puzzled in mazes, and perplexed with errors;
Our understanding traces them in vain,
Lost and bewildered in the fruitless search,
Nor sees with how much art the windings run,
Nor where the regular confusion ends.”

CHAPTER XXIX.



The snow lay piled against the doors and windows; it had, too,

“Daintily threaded with pearls all the pines,
And clung like love to the leafless vines.”

And still it was drifting its feathery showers earthward, like the moultings of angel wings. The storm was indeed shrouding the grave of the dead day in white; and the winds moaned a requiem hopeless as the wail of Ænone's heart weeping about her beautiful but faithless Paris, extended on his funeral-pile within the storied walls of Ilium.

“Beechmoor” loomed cold and bleak against the gray sky; and the trees in the great old park, where the wandering orphan had sunk down to rest, with a half-uttered prayer for death struggling over her parched, pallid lips, tossed their great, bare boughs, as exhorting priests their uplifted arms, with the white drapery of their surplices flowing loosely in the wind.

One yellow gleam of light, like a great, golden finger, lay out on the lawn from the library window, where the curtains had been pushed aside as if for a restless heart to gaze upon something bleaker than its own gray ruins. And to and fro, up and down, flick-

ered the firelight on the snowy ceiling, like the fluctuations of hope and despair—now here, now there—uncertain, gasping, gone.

Everything in the old, familiar room, was the same as when Electra had last stood in her imperial beauty beside her friend, and had said, with crimson lip and flashing eye, like an inspired priestess within the shadow of a Delphian temple :

“Onward, upward, is the resolution, not the dream of my life.”

Years had passed. Her resolution and her dream had both been accomplished and realized. Life held no sorrows for her in the present too great not to be cured ; and those of the past had grown strangely dim, shining only, as they did, by reflection, from the radiant gleam of the “future’s rainbow.” Electra was no nearer his now, than she was on that day when he had pressed his hand upon her fevered cheek, and counted the mad pulsing of the blue veins leaping along her temple as she slept beneath the umbrageous wealth of the stately beech, while the rippling waters caressed and sang over her wearied feet.

Through all these years, wearily lapsing, he had been true to the memory of her youth, her goodness, and her beauty. She was the mistress of his mature love—the sole, unaltered, undisturbed queen of his heart.

She had been there that day—had trodden down the dead, “autumn-bronzed” leaves lying on the forest-mould of the old, familiar paths. She had filled the

house, the grounds, the whole world to him, with the light of her angelic presence, the glory of her smile, and the merry warble of her laugh.

She came to say “Good-bye,” before she set sail for the “Old World,” and to settle her long-standing indebtedness to him. She could not bear the thought, she said, of going so far away without one more look into that noble face which had bent over her like an angel’s in the past ; without once again clasping the hand whose friendship and protecting care had been so true ; and, with all the earnestness of her nature, thanking him for the generosity and kindness he had so incessantly lavished upon her. Then, too, she wanted to stand under the shadowing “roof-tree” which had sheltered her in the days when she was helpless, hopeless—a wanderer scorned by humanity, almost forgotten by God.

The old, mad love, which the man could never hope to conquer, leaped along his veins like molten lava ; and the touch of her hand made him tremble with excitement. That *dear* hand, nestling like a snowy dove on his arm, as they trod with even, measured steps through the woodland paths—it might never be his ! For, as they thus wandered in the winter sunshine, she had confessed to him, in reply to his again proffered suit, that her heart was another’s. He did not ask to whom she had given this great love whose wealth she had denied to him as above all price. It was enough for him to know that the bird he loved best would never warble sweet songs through the window of his

heart where he had waited so long for her coming; that no morning offering, no angel-dream at twilight, would thrill him with enrapturing delight. It was enough to know that it was another's; and that, even though seas and miles of rolling land, of mountains, and valleys, and the ceaseless hum of cities, stretched like a vast panorama between them forever—that, struggle as he might, as he had done and still would do, to uproot this noble affection in his breast, he would not be able to conquer it; for love once enshrined within the heart's "Holy of Holies," is ever

"Quiet, yet flowing deep, as the blue Rhone among rivers."

Yes, Electra had come and gone; and he, with brow bared to the sunlight, like a loyal subject when his queen sweeps by, had stood out on the terrace and watched the carriage slowly disappearing from his longing, loving gaze, with its precious burden, forever. And then he had turned with a great, gasping sob, and gone in from the brightness of the day which only mocked at his grief, to the silence of that old library, filled with so many floating phantoms of the beautiful "lang syne"—alas! so long ago, it seemed as if they had never been!

"Ah! sad and strange, as in dark summer dawns,
The earliest pipe of half-awakened birds
To dying ears, when unto dying eyes
The casement slowly grows a glimmering square,
So sad, so strange, the days that are no more."

For hours he had confined himself within this room, striving to conquer himself, and he lay now upon the

sofa with closed eyes and quivering lips, murmuring softly, sadly—as a man might who has sobbed himself quiet over the cold, dead face of his darling. It seemed but yesterday that the world was full of sunlight—and now! every hope was wasted—every dream blasted—every shrine desecrated by the presence of despair, and the grave of the past would only be kept green by his tears! Would the Beulah land ever alluringly spread its beauties before his eyes? Would his ears ever be ravished by the sound of the pearly stream of Eternity flowing over the golden sands of time? Who shall say what visions rose before that man's eyes as he faced

"The whole lonely length of a life,"

—visions of a pleasant country, of blue sky and singing birds and dancing sunshine; visions of old resting-places and oft-trod paths, where the woods ceased the rustling of their tiniest leaves to catch the echo of a silvery voice, the grace of a slender-limbed form, with fluttering robes and rich, dark hair, braided and banded like a rare Etruscan frame of brown and gold about the picture-face of some holy-browed saint; and, alas for the pangs of true but unrequited love! visions of a future life which would never look up to God's sunlight again—a life whose joy had died out in the smile of another man's eyes—which looked to nothing beyond the time when, folding his arms peacefully, he could whisper:

"Better than glory's pomp will be
That green and blessed spot to me—
A palm shade in eternity."

CHAPTER XXX.

WHEN Mrs. Evesham commenced her platonic amour with Mr. Eval Duval, it is a question of doubt whether she intended the flirtation as aught but a new mode of aggravation with which to rouse the dormant love or jealousy of her indifferent liege lord; but certain it is, that the excitement of the affair began to tell upon her own heart, and she confessed to her secret soul a deeper admiration than it was pleasant to feel—at least when the heart was not free to assert itself—for the gay cavalier, ever a devoted attendant upon her footsteps.

And what *was* Mr. Eval Duval? Simply a well-dressed villain—a titled, fine-looking libertine, whom men feared—and women “doted on,” and whom managing mammas were proud to welcome to their select drawing-rooms on the most familiar footing, because of his “ancestral line,” and his “bank-stock.” A man who destroyed and insulted the sanctity of home-affections with as little compunction as he would bite off the end of a fragrant *Habana*. A man who had animalized himself by years of crime—who could not look a virtuous gentleman fearlessly in the face; yet with whom said gentleman unquestionably trusted his wife, his sisters, or his daughters. A man who not unfre-

quently passed his shuddering, ghastly-faced victims with immaculately robed, pure-browed women on his arm. Indeed, has public estimation “canonized many an arch hypocrite, and martyred many a saint.”

Haughty Mrs. Moore, who, ever since her petted and only child's marriage, had occupied the position of a “minor” in the household, watched these proceedings with great and undisguised anxiety. She dared not, however, broach the tabooed subject, for her lady daughter “despised scenes.” And so matters rested when the leaves began to fall in another autumn. Fanny Evesham was neither a proud nor a wicked woman; she was only vain and thoughtless. She hungered and thirsted for love and admiration, and only thus far did she value her pretty face, and her varied accomplishments—as an opening to a mine of inexhaustible wealth, power, rank, and influence. The depths of her own heart were yet undiscovered, and she had only tasted the froth on the sweet wine of charming. Alas! she had no conception of the influence of the bewildering draught that the Circe, Mary Hardinge, was pressing upon her acceptance, with all the eagerness of an angel holding a jewelled cup of Paradisian dew to dying, fevered lips. She had a life to pursue, guided alone by passion and impulse. That route led onward—though she never paused to question whither. She was dissatisfied with herself, but she knew not why; she was in search of something, but the cry of Archimedes, “Eureka!” was still unuttered. She imagined she was pining for love; and

when this mood was upon her—not an unfrequent occurrence—Mrs. Hardinge was ever by to whisper, in her musical, sibilant voice, that the pleasure of being admired was no doubt sweet, but such a pleasure as was never to be possessed in fruition. Life had hitherto only yielded her the flavor of enjoyment; and the *Ceanothic ether* had only given her soul a passionate craving, a mad zest for “more,”—a yearning which refused to be longer satisfied with froth—which rebelled against the “husks” that an unloved, married life imposed upon her, and cried out for *manna—manna*—even as the Israelites of old, in the wilderness of Arabia. Reared in her gay, luxurious, republican home, with no wish or dream denied her—petted, admired, sought after from her earliest years—she was naturally vain; and naturally, therefore, placed a higher estimate upon her ascendant power over others than she in reality possessed. This was her pitfall. While she attempted to wield a control over Mr. Eval Duval, she never entertained the idea for a single instant that he, in turn, might influence her to evil. And yet it was so! Had she at this particular crisis engaged the friendship, or possessed the confidence of one judicious, disinterested female friend upon whom she could rely, rather than upon the dictates of her own misguided heart, she might have been saved. Now, for the first time, in this “dark hour,” Mrs. Moore realized that she had not done her duty by her daughter; that she had bestowed too much time upon her dress, her manners, and her “final settlement in life,” rather than upon

that lofty culture of the soul, and that noble expansion of the intellect that brings its own pleasures, as recompense for those who aspire to an altitude above the every-day occurrences of life. But her admiration for her child, and her conviction that her inward life was perfect as her external one, misled her. Her ambition had mounted to power, principalities, thrones even; but all had been for her darling, *her Fanny*. She was, however, cold and undemonstrative in her disposition, and this had always chilled and repelled the warm affections of the young woman's heart, rather than strengthened and encouraged them. But, alas! now her anxiety wore upon her constitution to such a degree, that change of scene was recommended as absolutely essential to a longer life; and with a sad, foreboding heart, she bade farewell to “Aylesford,” and set sail for the dear familiar places of her old home in the “New World,” where, too soon, the story of her child's shame followed her—to blight and sadden the remainder of her existence. The parting interview between mother and daughter was affecting to both. Mrs. Moore had cast herself upon the breast of her child, in a passion of tears, and invoked her to obey, love, and be true to her husband; and while her daughter's heart still pulsed with the mad fear that her *penchant* for Mr. Duval had been discovered, she had turned to Lynn Evesham with equal *abandon*, exclaiming:

“My son—my son—I gave her to you pure, innocent, undefiled; promise me—oh! promise me, in this parting hour, perhaps the last we shall ever pass to—

gether—to protect, to cherish, to love her, in the fullest acceptance of your marriage-vow !”

The man, startled out of his usual reserve, could only hold her to his heart, and beg her to be calm, promising, at the same time, to do any and all things that she wished ; and he looked at Fanny with a silent appeal in his handsome eyes, as if assuring her of his earnestness ; but with a mad perversity which was teaching her to turn from all that was good and noble in life, and persistently lean out in her bewildering beauty to the allurements of a thoughtless, false, erratic existence, without fear of God or respect for man, with an insulting sneer and a restless tap of her absurd little slipper on the tapestried floor, she turned her head in an opposite direction, and the moment of reconciliation was past—never—never to return.

Again was she clasped to the almost broken heart of her agonized mother, and an instant later—was alone.

There was a quivering of her sweet lips she in vain strove to conquer, and a dimness in her intense blue eyes, long since unused to weep. Putting up her hand, she brushed from her cheek tears not her own. Ah ! what a parting gift from a mother !

With a little, nervous laugh, she exclaimed :

“Oh, pshaw ! it is too late to think of retracting now ; and besides all that, Lynn never did love me, nor I him ; and surely there is as much sin in living with a man between whom and myself there is no tie of either spiritual or material existence, as breaking legal bonds binding me to him, and living with the

man whom I *do* love. Ah ! well, Mamma, I am glad you did not remain to witness the *denouement* ! Perhaps memory and love, with commingling balm, will soften your scorn, and recalling my childhood's days, in our old Kentucky home, will teach you to pity me. Yes, the old ocean divides us : you in the Western wilds of the ‘New World’—I, in the storied clime of the ‘Old.’ We have parted—never to meet again !”

Ah ! if she could then, but for an instant, have lifted the veil which shrouded the future's face, with what appal and shuddering she would have shrunk away ! Well would it have been for her if the memory of those vanished days had touched her own heart with a softening potency ; well would it have been for her if the mild, steadfast eyes of her dead father had confronted her then, if his dead lips had warned her to turn aside from the heedless path she was pursuing !

With graceful abandon, which in spite of her had something of reckless despair in it, she cast herself in a lounging-chair, and continued her reverie.

How sadly did she need a real friend ! Some one to explain to her her duties, and expose the temptations surrounding her—their falsity, and the consequent sorrow yielding to them would entail upon her. She was so vacillating in her nature and her emotions ! Alas ! alas ! Now in the heyday of life, when she possessed wealth, health, youth, and beauty ; when countless sources of happiness and enjoyment bent rose-crowned from every hour ; now, when she could taste or drink to satiety the rare amber-hued Falernian of Love, or

the pale, aromatic Tokay of passion, she did not pause to think intoxication was a sure concomitant to either, if too deeply imbibed—but she chose the Tokay, and little dreamed that the wine once spilled, might never sparkle in the jewelled cup again. Ah! if she could only have known that the stream would run dry!—and that the sweet pearls shimmering and glimmering under the bright rippling waves of life, in glamorous glory, would prove only dry, ugly pebbles when in the palm of her snowy hand! If she had only known that the green leaves lying over her dreaming heart, cooling its fever-heat with their umbrageous, refreshing, soothing sweetness would wither and die, and that the dancing, leaping sunshine, would fade with the setting sun behind dark clouds whose denseness and gloom could only be distinguished by the fierce lightning flashes brightening the blackness of the night—brightening it to destroy; if she could only have penetrated the future, how different all might have been!

“Ah!” she sighed, “under any other circumstances I might act differently; but Eval Duval is my—*destiny!*”

Destiny, indeed! How wonderful must that power be which can set at defiance all natural and constitutional tendencies which have grown with our very growth! which can overrule, separate, and rejoin again in unknown forms our past elements of existence! Mrs. Moore's departure from “Aylesford” was a sign for the *denouement* of that family tragedy Mrs. Hardinge had been so long planning, with a cruel ruthlessness of which her degraded nature alone was capable.

Mr. Evesham accompanied his mother-in-law to Lancaster; and as it lay some fifteen miles away, north of the “Hall,” he could not hope to return to Aylesford that day unless he imposed a weary, disagreeable drive upon himself, and this he had no intention of doing. Therefore, it only remained for them to avail themselves of his absence, and make a quiet, but hasty exit. All in vain, however, were these facts impressed upon Mrs. Evesham; for, with a steadiness wholly at variance with her former vacillating disposition, she now sturdily and emphatically refused to go until the next night. In vain the pleading of her friend and the passion of her lover—she was resolute.

The night passed and morning came again over the world.

“The gray dawn brightened, and the moon
Moved like an uncrowned queen away.”

And with the morning came Mr. Evesham from Lancaster. Now, when the noble gentleman gave his word to Mrs. Moore to do anything and everything she wished, he was in deep, sober earnest; and if Fanny had only known how, or, better still, if she had *cared* to take the emotion at its tide, it would have led her on to happiness. But she did not. And so, remembering her sneer, and ever hearing the restless tap of that satin slipper, Mr. Evesham returned to his home with a dark shadow regnant upon his brow. His phrase was courtly, but cold as ice; and when Mrs. Evesham stepped forward to greet him, with a gay smile and a

light word of welcome at his safe return, she was rewarded in the same measure as she had meted to him the day previous—with an averted, indifferent eye. Whirling away, with a hot flush mantling her face, she took the arm of Mr. Eval Duval, who stood beside her, and went off to the music-room. A moment later her sweet voice was heard pulsing its melody to that quaint, mellow old tune, "Allan Percy," to the accompaniment of her guitar. The manner in which she rendered the low notes of the "Lullaby, lullaby," was particularly felicitous; and soon the music-room was filled with gay faces, over which a veil of sympathy was thrown for that lady of high degree wedded to a cold and loveless lord—each one suiting the imaginary lorn lady to the fair musician. Mr. Duval stood nearest, turning the leaves of the music-book; but his eyes were restlessly, hungrily, eagerly watching the woman's face, as an index of her wounded heart. Looking up, at last, she flashed a glance at him from beneath the golden fringe of her azure eyes, which set his mad blood bounding. A glance was all she granted; but it was enough—sufficient to tell him everything drifted with the tide of his passion to the open sea, and a safe harbor in a foreign port. When she caught the expression of his face, Mrs. Evesham broke out into a reckless little laugh; and giving a sudden shove with her foot, let her guitar fall to the floor, while she exclaimed, in a pettish tone:

"I shall never sing again! I hope you all think of my last strain as you do of the dying swan's."

"There is no music like to that
With which the heart-strings break."

Again she took the waiting arm of Mr. Duval, and returned to the drawing-room. All the day passed as days generally do, in uncongenial, frivolous society. And at last the sun set, red and glaring; and the wind rising, shrieked through the lofty pines gleaming like armed warriors in the glowing evening light—bowed with a dull, swaying motion, the sturdy cedar boughs, and swept with a deepening murmur through the bending grass, ripe and ready for the mower's scythe—and on, down to the beach, where the shining pebbles and shells, amid the smooth, hard sands, kept up a ceaseless toying with the snowy fringe of the rapidly darkening sea, murmuring in the distance with a hollow, angered roar, in warning of the approaching tempest.

"I think we will have a storm, to-night," said Mr. Hardinge, as he stepped out on the verandah looking westward to the bay, and flashed his glance over the gloomy sky.

Mrs. Hardinge overheard the remark; and lightly resting her hand on Mrs. Evesham's shoulder, murmured in a caressing tone:

"Shall we again wait, preys to whilom fancy, about redemption?"

The sweet face had a weary, hunted look about it, that almost thrilled a throb of pain into Mrs. Hardinge's heart as it turned full upon her; but the firm, liquid tones reassured her the moment the red lips parted:

"No longer. The seal is set."

Moving away, amid the "goodlie company," her gay laugh was soon heard mingling with the rest.

The midnight hour, the time allotted for departure, found Fanny ready for her final farewell. When Mr. Duval appeared before her she seemed suddenly petrified. "Wait one moment," she said. Sitting down before her desk, she wrote a few hasty lines; and then enclosing them in an envelope, and superscribing it to Mr. Evesham, she rose, and, with a fleetness entirely unusual, and a noiselessness which surprised herself, she sought her husband's apartment. He had retired hours before, having made his recent drive to Lancaster an excuse for his unceremonious conduct. Mrs. Evesham knew she was incurring a risk which might frustrate every plan she had made for the future; but she could not resist the impulse which led her to that door. She opened it—she entered the room. Mr. Evesham, from his bed, saw her, and feelings of tenderness and surprise battled for mastery in his heart, for weary weeks had passed since with this freedom she had approached him. Going softly to the mantel she deposited her little letter; and then, with the same echoless step, advanced to the bed and stood silently beside him. He had closed his eyes at her approach, lest, discovering his wakefulness, she should go out; and now he lay perfectly motionless, waiting to see what she would do. A tear fell upon his cheek. Its touch upon the fevered flesh was like opobalsam. He lifted his eyelids, expecting to meet the gaze of two

meek blue eyes, dimmed and tenderly sad with emotion, and he met only—blankness. Mrs. Evesham had vanished. He started from his bed in surprise, exclaiming:

"Surely I did not dream! I am sane!"

No, he had not dreamed; for there was the snowy envelope on the mantel. Springing forward he grasped—he opened—he read it. Indeed was the seal set.

Hastily dressing, he ordered his horse, and in less than fifteen minutes after he read that note he was bounding along in the darkness. Suddenly a thought pierced his mad brain. Perhaps they had taken the Ulverstone road; perhaps they had gone over the Bay route. Turning, he plunged over the path he had so lately traversed. Again the fair view of "Aylesford" gleamed out in surpassing beauty as

"A vivid, vindictive, and serpentine flash
Gored the darkness, and shore it across with a gash."

The sheeted rain fell in torrents, the winds shrieked and howled like unfettered demons, and the ocean roared and lashed the trembling earth in unbridled fury. Suddenly a view of the open sea was presented to the desperate man's gaze, and he beheld what, had he lived a thousand years, could never have been blotted from his memory.

Ridges of white foam seamed the black waves that dashed upon the shore, casting a feathery, silvery spray against the sturdy cliffs defying them; but out amid the vast waters he saw a boat tossing like a light cork

amid the breakers. The rowers were trying to make for shore, but the fierce billows precluded all such idea. Assistance was impossible. Mr. Evesham knew this, as he looked down upon them. Suddenly a lull in earth and sky—

“A moment of suspense,
A straining of each nerve more tense,
A rushing as of leaves upon the wind”—

and then a hollow, continuous, shrieking, hissing roar, as the panting sea yearned for its victims—and then a woman's shriek, wild, terrible, intense, cleft the darkness, rose above the wind and moaning rain :

“Lynn! Lynn! Oh, God have mercy! My mother!”

The storm continued with unabated violence. Again a fierce electric gleam shot athwart the sky, black with battalions of clouds, and by its light Mr. Evesham saw an arm, white as a Lurker maid's, a hand, a pallid, panic-stricken face raised above the black waves—and then darkness shut out sight, and he knew they were no more; he knew that Fanny's laugh, her touch, her voice, her grace had passed from his home forever. He knew, too, that she had been untrue to him. He remembered the tear that she had let fall upon him in that parting visit, and he put up his hand to dash it away, for it seemed searing his flesh to the bone. With a thin, crazy laugh, he cried out :

“It is only the rain beating in my face; I fancied it was a tear.”

The man was almost mad—first with a consciousness of his wife's treachery; and again, alas! with the realization that God's vengeance had overtaken the perjured and the perjurer ere he had met them face to face, and blighted them with his scorn. Raising his voice, he cried :

“Better, oh, far better thus, for them and for me, than that the name of ‘Evesham’ should bear a stain! Sleep, woman—sleep uncursed by me; and God be your Judge, for He alone knows the law!”

Turning his horse's head once more homeward, he rode with a slow and wearied pace. Gradually the storm cleared, and

“Heaven yearned in stars,”

and soon in the east a clearer light burned, telling of the coming dawn—and such a dawn!

Wearied, travel-sore, despairing, he entered his home once more, and sought his own room. Denying himself to all, the morning passed away, and by the sunset hour “Aylesford” was deserted by its guests and the stricken man was left alone in his sorrow; for what have fashionable people to do with grief? What possible necessity is there for them to linger to give condolence to a mourning host whose doors will no longer roll back to invite them to feasts of dance and wine?

On the third day a body drifted ashore at Aylesford. It was a woman's—bloated, horrible, with distended eyes and writhed features, and a portion of a cheek eaten away by the ravenous fishes. The body had

nothing by which to identify it as Mrs. Evesham's, nor yet to particularize it with that of Mrs. Hardinge, until the maid of the latter, with tears and wild lamentations, identified her.

"Oh, see! see! She was telling her beads!" she cried.


It was only too true; with a grasp strong in death she clutched her *cerite* rosary. Alas! vainly were the beads and crosses counted, numbered with errors of omission and commission—in vain were the decades blessed with "aves." Gone, all gone! Earth's triumphs and losses were faded now, and the woman's unprepared soul had been summoned before the grand tribunal! Truly has it been said, "We know not the day nor the hour." Gone to her eternal home, where a just God judges alike the innocent and the guilty, and metes unto each a "fitting reward."

The dead woman was laid away, solemnly, silently, under the bending, swaying larches, and ere the holy calm of a Sabbath fell over the lately gay chateau, the heavy portals were closed, and Mr. Evesham

"Wore his sandal shoon and scollop shell,"

and he turned his face to the Orient and became a wanderer on the world. How long he was to seek the Ararat rising from out the sea of despair—how long ere the dove would fly to his breast bearing the olive-bough—time alone could decide.

CHAPTER XXXI.

T sea! Can anything be more delightful? Nothing to change the sublime, monotonous surge of the waves ever flowing to distant worlds, save the grandeur of the gorgeous sunset, the rising of the moon like a great golden globe from the sea, the myriads of stars, the glory of the rosy morn, and here and there a gwylan drifting over the vast expanse like a speck before the wind. Such was the varied panorama that afforded enjoyment to the McDowells through the bright April-time.

For days the ship had been abroad on the vast waste of waters, and for days Alice, prostrated beyond all expectation with the voyage, had been hovering on the boundary of another world. Ah! as she looked over the 'dark and deep blue ocean' whose awe-inspiring flow of gloomy billows, in solemn chant, told of the wrecks which lay on the tessellated pavements below, and into the far distance, where beryl and lapis lazuli and golden haze floated together, she knew the hours of life were numbered for her; and yet no shadow gloomed her brow, no shrinking from Death pulsed in her faintly beating heart. Her trust and faith and hope had risen on their rosy wings to that "home beyond the stars" where there is no more parting. "Heimgary" was in her soul, and she was even now looking

down the indistinct lines of the golden streets of the New Jerusalem, with only a sweet regret lingering over her for the dear land of her childhood, and the familiar faces of those her heart held fondest. A peace which surpasseth understanding was hers, and her tranquil mind, never having trespassed against or offended the world—never having doubted it as a capricious friend—never having courted its applause or contemned it—now released its dreams of life un murmuringly.

Aubin McDowell was almost beside himself with grief. He held no living thing so near and so dear as this fair child of his early love—this earthly angel loaned for a little while only, to tell how bright and glorious was that spirit-land to which she was returning. He hung over her unwearyingly, despair impressed upon his proud features, contracting the broad brow and stamping it with the wrinkled monogram of pain, and sealing the usually flexible lips into unsmiling, heart-breaking sadness. Looking on his child, it was almost impossible for him to take the consoling faith in God's mercy and love unto himself which has long taught many fainting hearts to garner up unfailing strength in hours of almost crushing trials. In vain were his passionate prayers—in vain his wild weeping. He saw, with almost a sense of madness stealing over him, that she was fading from his sight, from his love, and he was powerless, alas! to save her. How hard it was to give his darling up, even into the cradling arms of Christ!—she who, since the hour of her birth, had made heaven nearer and earth fairer to him! All

that was noblest and purest and deepest; all that was fairest and truest and best in this man's heart was centred in his daughter. What matter that the green ivy of love from his other children and his noble wife united to brighten and smooth, to cling about and beautify the declining years of his life? His heart would ever hold lonely gray ruins, and no ivy tendrils could beneath their glossy red-veined leaves hide the lovely, pallid face of his cherished child. The light of hope was dying out with the saintly smile of brown-eyed, holy-browed Alice—dying out, never to be resurrected from the dust again. One evening she seemed so much better, and plead so earnestly that she might be taken upon deck to see the sunset, that her father consented to gratify her, though with many misgivings. The air was particularly mild, and the Tyrian dyes of sunset more than usually brilliant. As Alice lay upon the sofa, which had been carried on deck for her accommodation, with her arm about Mrs. McDowell's neck, who knelt beside her, and her other hand clasped in that of her father, who anxiously stood watching her—

"The light of immortal beauty
Silently covered her face,"

and the dreary, gray shadows of despair crept ever upward and over his own.

The young girl's eyes were filled with tears—happy tears, that gleamed but did not fall over the transparent pallor of her wan cheek.

"Papa," she said, in a voice sweet as the softest

strain of Æolus, "do you see far off to the North those rising cliffs like pyramids of lapis lazuli, melting into the ultramarine of the sky? That is my first glimpse of the land of my heart and my love—my own happy England. After all, the gold-hearted, red-lipped daisies I love so well will blossom over me. Oh! how the memory of these little starry-flowers spangling the dew-kissed meads of May, brighten and beautify all the sunny path leading me back to childhood again! Oh, don't you remember how I used to cull them at the 'Willows,' when the thorn-bush fringed the meadows with snow? I will never so gather them again! Never again will the low psalm of their beauty be sung to my heart—save over my dust!"

Thus she talked on, and

"Lived her childhood again,
Linked to the Past by a frail daisy chain!"

and at last looking up she caught her father's despairing eyes fastened hungrily upon her. Pressing his hand closer, while a smile illumined her face, she said:

"Papa, do not look at me in that heart-broken way; it makes me unhappy. And ah! it is so much better that you should obey God's decree un murmuringly. And besides this—though I love you all so devotedly, so entirely—my heart cries with the Christian poet—

"Jerusalem the golden,
I languish for one gleam
Of all thy glory folden
In distance and in dream!"

My thoughts, like palm in exile,
Climb up to look and pray
For a glimpse of that dear country,
That lies so far away."

"Oh, my child, don't talk so—it kills me!"
The strong man gasped through his rising sobs.

"But, dear Papa, I must talk to you. After I have gone to sleep forever, you will be sorry that you did not allow me to tell you all that is in my heart."

She paused, and Mr. McDowell pressed the little hand, whose pulse fluttered

"Like a shot bird,"

closer within his clasp, murmuring in a low voice:

"My darling, when you fade in your beauty from my gaze, all that is beautiful on earth—all that is beautiful to me—will have passed away. I cannot survive it—it is killing me—killing me!"

"Papa, do not pain me by talking thus! You have mamma, and my little brother Ernst, and Valerie yet, for whom to live and love. Our parting will not be forever; and I shall often watch over you in the spirit, when you will not dream I am near. You will live in our own land, Papa, after I am dead? You could not leave me alone at the 'Willows;' and ah! you would sadly miss me at 'Clifton!' Do not go back there! It is a beautiful home—but I sorrowed my only sorrow there; and then, too, it is not a pleasant place for mamma to live in. She is good, and loves you so dearly, that it should be your joy to gratify her in all things. Promise me that you will do so!"

"Yes, yes, my sweet child!" replied her father, in a low, sad tone, as he bent over her, with an indescribable, yearning tenderness burning in his expressive eyes.

"I wish I could see Electra again; but I will wait for the dawn of a brighter to-morrow. And the farewell kiss I gave her, when we separated in Harrisburg, will be the only one her lips will receive from mine till we meet in the New Jerusalem. I want her, when she can leave the 'Hall,' to come down into Stafford, sometime, to the 'Willows,' to visit my grave; and never, never to forget me. Tell her this for me, Papa!"

Her voice failed her.

"I will rest now, and talk again by and by," she said; and a moment later whispered again in a low, dreamy tone: "Yes, I will rest now."

Her gaze wandered over the blue deep, and traced the curling spray dashing and sparkling in the wake of the ship. The glowing sunset had died out from the sky in the west, leaving only a pink flush and a golden glare, widening into vistas as they floated up against the sky, gleaming like chrysoprase, with the golden stars twinkling here and there from the blue battlements, and laughing at their images in the sea below, that the curling waves dashed into a thousand fragments of light as they touched them. The waxen lids closed down over the radiant eyes gleaming beneath the snowy brow banded by braids of shining hair. Her hands were folded on her bosom, as if in perfect rest. While

Mrs. McDowell sat looking on the sweet face, a little, fluttering sigh crossed the gentle lips:

"Papa!"

"Husband, she speaks to you," said Mrs. McDowell, softly.

"What is it, my darling?"

The grief-stricken man bent down to press a kiss on the brow

"That lay like blue-veined cameo,
In frame of wrought Etruscan set."

But the pulse was still, and never more came an answer to him from the pale lips of his dead darling. Faded with the flush of the dying day, as calmly and as sweetly into the presence of the angels and of the "Great God-light."

"Oh! my child, my child! Would to God I had died for thee!"

The cry went up single, echoless, with all the despair of humanity, even as it gored itself through the lacerated and bleeding heart of King David, when he wept above his haughty, proud-browed Absalom. Sympathy can often soothe sorrow; but words of consolation could not assuage the woe of that stricken father's heart, when, in the shadows of the weeping "Willows," in his old boyhood's English home, he would sit by the little grave of his dead darling, and cry out in the dark for one glimpse of her dear face again, and in return receive only the mocking silence, and the lonely

length of the green mound 'neath which slept his all.

"When some beloved voice, that was to you
Both sound and sweetness, faileth suddenly,
And silence, against which you dare not cry,
Aches round you like a strong disease and new—
What hope? What help? What music will undo
That silence to your senses? Not friendship's sigh—
Not reason's subtle count. Nay, none of these!
Speak thou, availing Christ, and fill this pause."



CHAPTER XXXII.

SHALL he come, Electra?"

"Just as you choose, grandmother."

"That reply does not at all satisfy me. I have no choice in the matter. It is one which you alone are empowered to decide. Shall I tell your cousin to come to the 'Hall?'"

Mrs. Dudley turned her proud, aged face full upon her granddaughter, as they sat together in the dying twilight of a winter's day.

Four years had passed—the winters into the springs; and the springs had warmed into summers, which in their turn lay down to their last sleep in the graves the glowing autumns dug into the moist fallow of the forests, and covered with sun-bronzed leaves. It was February again, and as Electra turned from her grandmother's inquisitive gaze to the cold, cheerless view of the hills rearing themselves like blind worshippers to kiss the sky—to the bare boughs, and the seared grass in the park, and the strawed and matted bushes, and rare shrubs and plants on the muddy yellow terraces, and heard the ghostly shrieking of the wind—her heart grew sick within her at the recollection of the desolate, barren life she was living. Her grandmother personified, in her cold, cheerless existence, the counterpart of

Aurora Leigh's frozen spinster aunt, whose very hair was

" — Braided tight,
As if for taming accidental thoughts
From possible pulses."

And she had not one emotion or thought in sympathy with her own. She had no loves, no friendships with the outside world, beyond the rigid pale of conventional etiquette, save an occasional letter from Doctor Brandenburg. She had "no heart" to mingle in gay society. Her cousin William's death, and that of her beloved friend and darling pupil, Alice McDowell, had completely crushed joy from her heart, smiles from her lips; and the rosy flush of health which once glowed and burned so beautifully on her cheeks seemed to have forsaken them forever. Her grandmother had no love for her—at least in the outward semblance of her chilled existence she never betrayed it.

"She did her duty though
In large measure, well pressed out
But measured always."

The opportunity now presented itself when she might change everything, if she only cared to do so. Lynn Evesham had written from Rome that he soon expected to sail for Egypt, and asked to visit the "old homestead" before his departure, as he might not return to Europe again in years, if ever. He had not addressed the letter to her, but to her grandmother. Only desiring at the close to be remembered to his cousin. This

did not pique or pain Electra, for the deed was pregnant with the man's doubting but intense love. She referred the question of his reception at the "Hall" to her grandmother, because she did not wish to seem to cast herself in his way, as if she desired to resurrect the halcyon lang syne from the crumbling altars of a sad and painful past—because few a silvery *immortelles* of memory might chance to spring from the gray and blackened ashes.

"If that past *can* be resurrected," she whispered to her beating heart, "he must be the one to 'roll the stone from the grave away.'"

Standing there in the orange and gray sunset of a February day, she realized in the hasty review of her own emotions past and present that she had not forgiven Lynn Evesham for marrying Fanny Moore—when his love was her own; and that it *was* her own, she could not doubt when she recalled the parting in the vestibule at Beechmoor six years before, when he had looked down in her eyes with a passionate pleading that seemed to say, "Oh, bid me stay!" even though his proud, handsome lips never moved to breathe a single word beyond that "Good-bye," which pulsed out his despair, and which she had not seemed to notice, in her simple speech returned:

"Good-bye, Mr. Evesham."

How madly the memory of those days made her blood bound! Would she never outgrow this foolish passion?

She pressed her hot cheek close against the window-

pane, almost breathless with the tide of memories sweeping over her.

"Well, Electra, I am waiting for your decision—it is necessary that Mr. Evesham should receive an early reply," said Mrs. Dudley.

"Grandmother," said the blushing girl, suddenly facing about, and speaking with emotion, "tell him to come as soon as possible."

Mrs. Dudley smiled as the young girl went out from her presence, and said softly, taking up the pen to write :

"It may be so. If Mr. Evesham does not marry her, she will never marry; and if she refuses to marry him, the name will die with him, for he will wed no other woman. It does not take long for married eyes to discover how the hot blood of youth pulses. Mr. Evesham must be quite an elderly man. But Englishmen seldom marry early. It will all come right at last."

Electra, going up to her own room, knelt upon the hearth-rug and gazed into the glowing embers in the grate. There were airy castles in them for her, with minarets and gilded domes; beautiful castles, peopled with fairy visions of the soul;—the brightest homes, after all, for sorrow never enters there.

While she knelt, she felt that, the dark hours passed, angels were leading her into paths of pleasantness, and that

"All the jarring notes of life
Seemed blending in a psalm :
And all the angles of its strife,
Were rounding into calm."

A month later, as the last gleam of the sunset's dying smile spread a "misty, gold-tinted veil of light over the world," she was sitting alone in the library, before Mr. Evesham's *escritoire*. A letter containing many closely written pages lay upon the floor, and in her hand she held a miniature of herself, which Mr. Evesham had, as his wife averred, painted from memory.

She had just received the letter, lying near her, from Mr. Evesham; he was in Paris, and would, with all possible dispatch, wend his homeward way—would visit the "Hall," where her reception of him would determine whether he should sail for Egypt, or remain in England. She knew his past life; she knew that jealousy and misrepresentation, and her own *hauteur*, had already burdened him with a sorrow few men could bear and live. And it now remained wholly and entirely with her, whether his future should be companion to his past. Electra was touched to the soul by his passionate words, and it needed no lengthy debate between her conscience and her heart, to decide in his favor. The memory of "Beechmoor"—of the vanished *lang syne* was too fresh—the passion of her heart was too ardent to be either crushed or controlled. She, too, had borne her burden of grief, and now, when the cool shadow of the "Rock" leaned to her from life's weary wayside, why should she hesitate to rest? Why stand with that burden, when Love stood waiting to shift it from her forever? She would not; she *would* meet Mr. Evesham as the emotion of her heart dictated. A shadow fell over her and then passed, but she failed to

notice it—failed to look up; and yet there stood beside her a man travel-stained and sun-bronzed. There was a hungry eagerness, a tender, passionate yearning in his great dark eyes, as he bent them on her, sitting silently in her unconscious loveliness.

Her lips moved; the gentle words, as soft as laughter in a dream, bubbled over them:—"Oh, Lynn, love of my girlhood and of my maturer years, no power can tear you from my heart! I have sought to forget you—but the day could sooner desert the night, the stars the heavens, the angels God, than I thee! Can you come to me? Ah! do I not see you now in your towering pride, with your blazing eyes and bold matchless brow—and does not my soul kneel in homage—"

A broad, fond palm rested upon her bowed head; a voice, husky and deep with emotion, pronounced her name—

"Electra!"

Springing to her feet, she confronted Mr. Evesham, and overpowered with embarrassment, she stood silently, with downcast eyes, before him.

"Electra, if your heart thus pleads for me, shall it do so in vain? May I not build a 'soft palace in the fairy future,' or shall I turn from the love and the beauty of life a wanderer from country, from home, from God, forever? Speak, Electra darling! This fairy-tale of my heart cannot be new to you; you must realize that I have adored you for years—that I must always do so. When my great sorrow fell upon me, I

foreswore faith in all women—even you, dearest; I thought myself stronger than time has really proven me to be. Your image haunted me ever—in the silent watches of the night, in the garish glare of day, at noon, at eve, in the busy haunts of men and the calm of unbroken solitude, it was all one to me! Like the guardian angel in a pleasant dream, you ever wooed me to paths of beauty and peace. I have come—I have answered the yearning cry of my heart; does your own hold no echo for me? Speak, darling."

Stepping closer beside her, he wound his arm with unreprieved tenderness about her, and drew her to his heart.

"Has my Electra no answer for me? Must the gem and the fountain in my heart still remain undiscovered?" he asked again, in a tone of thrilling, passionate melody; and like the music of Æolian harps answering the wooing of the summer wind, her steady, sweet voice answered him:

"Lynn, I have always loved you."

Her starry eyes were gazing in his own now, and her graceful form, with yielding sweetness, nestled to his side, as his strong arms clasped her closer.

Stretching out his hand to the *escritoire*, he touched a secret spring and a drawer opened. From it he took his uncle Claude's letter, and silently handed it to Electra. As the page turned displaying the words, "I have always desired to cement a union between you two," he pointed to it with trembling eagerness, and then drawing the paper from the snowy hands, he held the blushing face up to his ardent gaze.

"Electra?"

He whispered her name, his breath pulsing hotly with excited suspense, and she replied in a low, thrilling tone :

"Lynn."

The fringed eyelids veiled the dreamy eyes, but the quivering lips' red richness received the wealth of love and kisses, as Lynn Evesham folded her fondly to his heart.

AT LAST, at last, the *Elysée Campii* was won !

A sigh almost a moan smote the silence. They looked up simultaneously, and beheld Mrs. Dudley standing in the doorway.

Electra sprang toward her.

"Oh ! Grandmother, I am so happy ! Give me a home in your heart too—now that I am no longer a reproach in your sight. Grandmother, bless me !"

Sinking at the old lady's feet, she uplifted her sweet, holy face, and the withered hands gently descended upon her snowy brow, while the austere, melancholy features strangely softened :

"May God indeed bless you, my child ! and teach you to forgive my harshness and cruelty in the past ; for oh ! Electra, I have none to love but you—none else to whom I can turn for support in my declining years—none save *you*—"

"And me, Grandmother," said Mr. Evesham, folding his arm about her aged form.

United in love, their lives bade fair to be as smooth and peaceful in their flow to the broad Ocean of Eter-

nity, as a river which ripples ever on through flowery banks to the murmuring sea—

"So all who walk steep ways, in grief and night,
Where every step is full of toil and pain,
May see, when they have gained the sharpest height,
It has not been in vain—
Since they have left behind the noise and heat.
And, though their eyes drop tears, their sight is clear,
The air is purer, and the breeze is sweet,
And the blue heavens more near."

