

JOHN WARD'S GOVERNESS.

JOHN WARD'S GOVERNESS.

A NOVEL.

BY

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TO

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES,

IN ADMIRATION OF HIS GENIUS,

AND WITH MANY THANKS FOR HIS KINDNESS,

This Volume is Dedicated

BY

THE AUTHOR.

"LIFE is but a song—

Art is wondrous long;

Yet to the wise her paths are ever fair,
And Patience smiles, though Genius may despair.
Give us but knowledge, though by slow degrees,
And blend our toil with moments bright as these,
Let Friendship's accents cheer our doubtful way,
And Love's pure planet lend its guiding ray,—
Our tardy Art shall wear an angel's wings,
And life shall lengthen with the joy it brings!"

HOLMES.

JOHN WARD'S GOVERNESS.

CHAPTER I.

It was in the year 18—, and the last season of the beautiful but ill-fated Astor Place Opera House. The house that had been so poorly supported was this one evening full to overflowing, for a very popular opera was being performed. The enthusiasm was great, and the applause general, as the favorite cantatrice finished one of her most difficult roulades, and bowed smilingly in answer to her warm reception. She had been much admired the preceding winter, and the second week of Rosa Bertini's engagement was truly a brilliant ovation.

It was a glowing, living, beautiful scene—the animated faces that greeted her, and the small gloved hands that did their share in the genuine enthusiasm of their applause. The song so generally applauded was repeated, and the Signorina Bertini sent a happy, eager, and saucy glance to one of the stage boxes, as, bowing and smiling, she ran off the stage, her hands filled to overflowing with flowers.

A young man was leaning far out of the box, watching eagerly every movement, as she bowed low, holding the handsomest bouquet—the one which he had thrown—in one hand, to distinguish it from the rest. It was a striking face

that answered her saucy look with one of deep admiration. Then the face disappeared, and he was seen making his way behind the side scenes, earnestly looking for some one.

"You are late, signor." And the dainty foot of the pet of the public was tapped impatiently, as it was seldom she deigned to wait for any one.

"Yes, Rosa, my beautiful one!" The small gloved hand was raised to his lips. "My sister."

"Yes, I know—la Signora Gátta." And the delicately curved lips laughed mockingly. "Signor Ward, your English names are so hard. Bah!" The pretty lips were puckered up very tight, as though the hard words hurt them.

"Don't, Rosa!" And the young man's face clouded. "You must love Margaret for my sake. Won't you, darling?" As the perfectly formed head was laid for one instant on his shoulder.

"Yes! yes! But la Signora Gátta,—how is she?" And the silvery laugh rang forth afresh.

"Margaret is very sick, wicked one!" The young man's laugh joined with, and echoed her own. "She will be better, Rosa, when she knows you! She must love you!" And the eyes were loving, confident, and full of hope that gazed at her seriously. "To-morrow morning! And then, Rosa Ward, forever."

"Oh, bah! Don't! don't!" The slight figure shuddered as she raised her hands in mock horror to her face, not heeding the pained look of her companion.

"Do you repent, Rosa?"

"No, no!" And seeing she was going too far, the loving look was called back to her eyes. "I will love all for you, signor." The actress—for she fully understood her part—raised her magni-

ficent black eyes to the speaker's face. The Signorina Bertini was extravagant, and the Signor Ward was rich; though she loved Paolo Giordino, the tenor of the troupe to which she belonged, as she had never loved man before, she would marry Mr. Ward instead of being true to him, as Giordino was poor, and poverty was too dreadful to be thought of. "She would have to leave the stage, and she was triste; but she would be a great lady, and if she tired, and did not like her new life, she would come back again. Signor Ward might storm and fret, but what did she care when she was the lady?" And so the little game went on.

John Ward. It was not a pretty or poetical name, and no wonder the Italian's ears, used to softer sounds, did not relish it. Mr. Ward, a rich banker of New York, died four years before my story opens, leaving his son a princely fortune, and under the protection and guardianship of his sister Margaret. Mr. Ward had been a proud man; and Margaret Ward, who at the beginning of my story was thirty-five, ten years her brother's senior, inherited all her father's pride. So it was not strange that she frowned on the young cantatrice, her brother's intended bride. All that a sister could do, had been done; but the young man grew only more obstinate, as he laughed at her prophecies of unhappiness, and rushed more blindly on to his destruction. "Be unhappy with his Rosa—impossible! And Margaret would learn to love her, too, in time; for who could resist her?" Spoiled from his youth up by a doting father, no wonder he listened coldly to his sister's warnings, and hurried more eagerly on. His mother died while he was yet

young; and his loving Margaret, who, until now, had never opposed him, was his chief guide and counselor. Enjoying life to the full, eager and confident in his trust of all this world could give, the young man who had never had a disappointment could not bear one now. "He was sorry Margaret was unhappy; but she was so good she would soon forget, and be the same loving sister he had always known. He could not help loving his Rosa. Had not all New York been subjugated?" And so the young dreamer reasoned on. He was troubled when he thought of Giordino; and one evening he had met him with Rosa, talking much too earnestly and affectionately to suit his ideas. Then Giordino had her ring; but what was a ring when he had its owner? So the fair cantatrice reasoned, and persuaded him. She would not leave the stage, but would be his singing bird till the end, when he locked her up in his cage with golden bars, as she laughingly styled his love when he twined his arms round her slender waist, while she tried to throw some of the lovelight into her eyes that came so readily at Giordino's call.

But Rosa was thinking of something more solid than love—real, veritable gold, and what it could buy, as she looked into her lover's trusting face with those treacherous dark eyes.

The programme said, the last appearance of the Signorina Rosa Bertini, who intended retiring from the stage, and so the house was crowded. And foolish John Ward was congratulating himself on his darling's bearing her withdrawal from the stage so bravely, and thinking how much she must love him to do so much for him; while Rosa, clasped tightly in Giordino's arms in their

final tableau, was shedding bitter tears—not for the loss of her old life, or of hope or prayer for her new, but simply that she was bidding good-bye to the man she loved. She was contrasting the life she had been living, wherein the Italian's love was all in all to her, with her future husband's cold home, as she scornfully styled it. She would go abroad, and she would see her Italy, but not with her Giordino. And the tears were very genuine that her treacherous eyes shed.

If John Ward could have only seen and understood them, his sister's life and his own would have been saved much sorrow. The Signorina Bertini was, however, too trained an actress; so the saucy lips only laughed more gayly, as the curtain was at last down, and she was thanking the man soon to be her husband, as he wrapped her warmly in her cloak, and pressed many loving inquiries for her comfort and happiness.

"The carriage is waiting, darling." The warm cloak was gathered more closely round her as he held both hands open waiting for the many wrappings and trifles she carelessly handed him. "Only to-night, and to-morrow you shall see Margaret, my darling!" The little hand that was so ruthlessly covering him with her belongings was detained for one instant in his own.

"Don't be foolish!" The white teeth pressed the full red lip as she jerked her hand roughly away. "You hurt me, John—my ring—and those people." The loving look was called back when she saw his changed face. Was not Giordino watching her? And all her new part was forgotten when she thought with a pang of their parting. She had never called him by his first

name, as it was so hard, so she said, and the pained look was all gone from the eyes that watched her, as again, forgetful of her petulance, he rapturously raised her hand to his lips. "I am tired, John. And those people stare so. Come!" Why could he not see that, as she walked on with him, the Italian following them stooped to pick up a closely written letter? Rosa Bertini was a finished actress, and she was only playing her part better than usual this evening.

The signorina had bidden good-by to the manager and the various members of the troupe who crowded round her, and Mr. Ward was waiting patiently till she was ready to go, congratulating himself on her love for him. He did not notice that it was only when they at last turned to go, and there was no longer any chance of seeing Giordino, that she was again tired. The moon was shining brightly, an auspicious omen for their future life, so her happy lover said. He was too blissful to observe the suppressed yawn, and the coldness of the hand he held in his own, as he told her of the home that had been his father's, and which would so soon be hers.

It was one of the most beautiful places on the Hudson; and his father had taken great pride in making it as perfect as he could for his boy: the young man was telling of that father's warm love and care for him, never thinking how pained his father would have been at the step he was taking. Margaret did not like it, but Margaret loved him so much it would soon all be right. He looked on his present disregard of her wishes and warnings, as he looked on many of his boyish escapades, when his sister had been kissed and coaxed into good humor again.

Margaret Ward had lived only for the pleasure of her father and brother, whom she idolized, not thinking of her life as owing any other duties than the love and care she could lavish on them so ungrudgingly. It was only now that a doubt came whether she had been wise or not; whether if she had spoiled her brother less, he might not so wildly have rushed on his fate as he was then doing. His sister could see no promise of happiness for him in his new life; she had never parted from her brother, and it seemed strange to think they should be separated now. The new love had filled his heart so entirely, there was no place for the old.

It was true, her brother had asked her to go with them across the ocean, but it was not done very warmly; the signorina was much too exacting, and required too many calls on his time for him to remain idle, or have any thought of other love than her own. Margaret would not have gone, however, even if her presence had been more urgently requested, as she would have felt strange and sadly out of place with the foreigner.

And then the gay life they intended leading would not suit her more serious tastes. She dreaded the new life for her brother, and passionately resented the loss of his love. After years of devotion, was all her love to be thrown aside for this stranger, whom he had only known a month? An actress, too! And the hot blood of shame mounted to her cheek when she thought of her disgrace. Miss Ward, like many others, inherited an absurd prejudice against everything connected with the stage; she was therefore confident that only misery and degradation could

result from her brother's marriage with an actress. She had not only guided his youth, but hoped to guide his choice of a wife. Had not pretty Lucy Cecil been staying with them a year, as she said, for companionship? The child was lovely, but much too young to be a companion for her, as she acknowledged in her inmost heart. Margaret loved and admired her pretty friend, and intended that her brother should do the same, for she would make a pattern little wife.

John had laughed with Lucy and been devoted to her all one summer, so that his sister smiled serenely on the fruition of her hopes, not thinking how soon they would be all shattered by his foolishness; as his sister, for the first time, had to find that her boy's will, as she had learned to call him, when opposed to her own, was the stronger of the two. Years ago Margaret Ward had refused the man she loved, a young missionary bound for Otaheite, simply because she could not leave her father and boy brother. For Margaret Ward was a worshiper at this eloquent young priest's shrine, and he had convinced her that a mission in Otaheite would be the height of all earthly bliss. Now she acknowledged to herself that her whole life and her soul's welfare had been sacrificed to her boy brother, who so little counted the cost.

It was a bitter thought, though some of my readers may be unkind enough to smile at poor Margaret's view of life and her idea of bliss. There is nothing stranger in fiction than in real life, as we all know; and there is no accounting for taste. Miss Ward's idea of bliss was Otaheite and naked savages; and though you and I may smile, she would be just as little contented

with our ideal. Religion is a good thing; there is nothing better, nothing more worth wishing for than to be good. But religion carried to fanaticism is an abomination, and almost as dangerous in its influence on others as no restraining influence at all. You can understand, therefore, what little chance there was of the Signorina Bertini and Miss Ward becoming nearer to each other.

Margaret knew that her brother was often at the opera and other places of amusement; and though she loudly denounced countenancing such places in others, John had been her idol, and could do no wrong. So that what would have been considered wicked in another, was looked on more leniently in her brother's case. Young men would be young men; and that foolish saying of sowing their wild oats was quoted in her brother's favor. John would settle down in a year or two with pretty little Lucy, and she would keep house for both her children. All had been arranged in her own mind, though it was not to be carried into execution. So Margaret Ward had lived on happily, contented in her Dorcas and monthly meetings, and satisfied in her church, sometimes longing for the time when her boy would settle down and be all in all to her.

The settling down process, however, never came, and John had laid in a larger share of wild oats than his sister dreamed of. The time had come for their separation; her brother would make the Signorina Bertini his wife next morning, and had wrung an unwilling consent from his sister to see her before they sailed. The poor boy was, she believed, bewitched by the arch-fiend himself.

John Ward had gone to spend the last evening with his adored Rosa; and Margaret Ward had gone to her bedroom, with her gold-stoppered smelling-bottle in one hand, and a manuscript book of daily prayers in the other, arranged expressly for her by the young Otaheitan minister when she was still young. So we will leave Miss Ward gaining refreshment and strength from her smelling-salts and prayers, and turn to the Signorina Bertini, and see how it fared with her.

The Astor House was in the zenith of its splendor. The most luxurious apartments were secured for the signorina's benefit by her own and her lover's orders. Dark-red curtains added beauty and softened the light that was shed through tinted globes on the richly furnished room. Small but beautiful was the parlor in which we find her, as all had been arranged to perfection. The air was laden with the perfume of flowers, as the signorina had many admirers who were very lavish of their floral offerings.

On a low couch, near the brightly burning grate, is seated the signorina, looking daz- zlingly beautiful in the rich dress that so well becomes her. She is a splendidly handsome woman, though small in comparison with her companion, who is far above medium height. The signorina is looking her best, as the blaze of gaslight suits her style of beauty, and only sets it off to fuller advantage. She is older than her companion by five or six years, and looks fully her age, for she has had a hard wearing life, and it is only as she is leaving the stage that at last her talent meets its due acknowledgment. She is a superbly beautiful woman; but though we

admire her charms, we cannot help wondering at the perfect ease with which she has blinded her companion. He is very young, only twenty-five, and though he thinks he loves as man never loved before, it was more as a piece of bravado, and to astonish his young companions, that the first step was taken. Then if his sister had been more patient, and had not opposed him so violently, and trumpeted Lucy Cecil's virtues so loudly, he might have paused to think before it was too late. But so it is, he is rushing madly on to his destruction; and now that Rosa's voice and influence are exerted, he feels infinitely happy, and regardless of consequences.

He is a very handsome man; though his beauty lies more in his figure and in his great strength than in his face. He is very tall, as I have said; we would not be inclined to notice this, however, unless he were contrasted with others, as his figure is so perfectly proportioned, and so easy and graceful in all its movements, that his great height is lost. It is a frank, open, manly face, not regular in features, but true and loving in its expression—a face that knows no deceit, and expects none in others; and as we watch him, we see how entirely unfitted he is to cope with the more wily nature of his lady-love, and how perfectly fitted are the coils of the chain she grasps so tightly.

It is a silken mesh, this girdle of love, but strong and firm in its coils as steel, which will bind its victim tightly to her will and pleasure. If she must lose her Giordino, she will pay herself well in all this world holds of good. Already there is some dispute between them, and as the young man pounds with the toy of a poker the brightly

burning bituminous coal till it rushes in one sheet of flame up the chimney, we see that something is wrong, and this is not the happy evening to which he has been looking forward.

"So you did not get that ring, Rosa, and you promised——"

"Signor, you are making the room too warm; do stop beating the coal: it is not poor Giordino's head."

"But why did you not get the ring?" And he threw himself discontentedly into a large arm-chair.

"How could you expect me to think of anything this evening?" A stress was laid on the last words.

"Rosa! Rosa! Is that true?" And the inert listless figure was beside her. "Is that the reason, darling?"

"Why not?" And the saucy black eyes looked into his own as no woman could look who really loved. "My poor boy!"—she ran her small jeweled hand through his thickly curling hair—"my poor boy! do you think you are such a monster?" And both hands were in requisition, as his face was turned toward the mirror.

"You love me, Rosa?" The question was asked for the thousandth time. "Say you love me, Rosa."

"Foolish boy! how often shall I tell you?"

"And Giordino?"

"Giordino is mio amico, and you are mio carissimo." The actress was doing her part better than she had ever done it before. "I am so tired, signor; let that do for to-night. You know I have to meet Signora Gatta to-morrow." And again the mocking laugh rang forth.

"What will you wear, Rosa?" The young man, already beginning to feel the difference in their position, looked anxiously at her, for he was afraid of shocking his sister by the actress's glaring taste in dress.

"My gray dress, to suit the signora; that will do."

"Yes, perfectly well." Glad that she did not care for something more conspicuous, he was satisfied.

"I am so tired, signor; how many times shall I tell you? Do go, and give my duty to your sister." Again she laughed mockingly.

"Well, good night, darling." And he held her for one instant to his heart. "Good night till to-morrow." Oh! if he had only opened the door and looked back, how different would have been his life! These little chances that come and go, dazzling one with their will-o'-wisp brightness!—seen one moment and gone the next!

As soon as the door was closed, the actress, till then an actress, ran to the little side table, turning eagerly over and over again the notes and cards that lay there, not finding the one she wanted. Only one, and she would have held back even then.

"Fool! fool!" And the sharp white teeth were firmly set on the full red lip till it lost all color. Then a richly jeweled locket was taken from her bosom, and she gazed with all her soul at the dark handsome face that laughed back into her own with those cruel mocking eyes. He had taken all her love, and then bade her wed this Yankee; and the scorn was very genuine as the words fell from her lips. There was a likeness

of her future husband on the table, and the temptation was great to take and break it into a thousand pieces. Quick as thought the miniature was crushed under her heel; and then sorry, or may be frightened, the broken fragments were gathered up carefully and thrown into the grate.

"Poor boy! poor boy! But if he had never come, Giordino would have been true and never told me to go. And now—fool! fool! that he is——" In a tempest of rage and distress the signorina threw herself on the couch and sobbed in a perfect passion of grief as for a few moments the woman asserted herself over the actress. Then she rose to her feet, and looked long at her face as she carefully effaced the traces of weeping. She must not spoil her eyes or her rouge; Giordino might come even yet, and the thought gave her new strength. But Giordino, wiser and more crafty than herself, did not come; and Rosa Bertini, tired of waiting, fell asleep with a locket pressed closely to her heart,—not John Ward's likeness, for that *smouldered in the ashes of the grate.*

CHAPTER II.

It was a gloomy morning that dawned on John Ward's new life, cold and cloudy, and the young man could not shake off his depression, now that he was out of Rosa's influence. He felt more unhappy still when his sister Margaret held him in a long loving embrace, and murmured many inquiries for his comfort and happiness. He must have a warmer coat; and lovingly and lingeringly the sister delayed their parting, while she showered blessings on him and prayers for his future happiness. Her heart was softened, and he was her own dear boy again, and I think if her brother had asked her to go with him now she would not have had the heart to refuse him.

It was well that he did not request that sacrifice, as there were many pages in the man's life it were wiser to forget; and it were better, if he had much to suffer, he should leave that suffering behind him away from his home, and come back where there was nothing, not even his sister, to remind him of the past. But I am anticipating the thread of my story, and must go back.

The brother and sister were a strange contrast—he so tall, full six feet in height, and strongly built in proportion, though the size and strength of fuller manhood were not yet attained; while Margaret Ward was far below medium height, being so small as almost to attract attention by her diminutive size. The Wards had all been a

handsome family, and particularly prided themselves on their figure and height. Margaret's petite form not meeting her father's approval, she had been quietly put aside for her tall, handsome brother. She had never resented or appeared surprised that her mother's care and all her father's love should have been lavished on him.

It had become so much a settled fact that their young king should rule all, that Margaret never questioned the justice of that rule. Her mother died when John was only twelve years old, and his sister had taken her mother's place. She had had other brothers and sisters, but they were all sleeping in the family vault, and she was the only one who remembered to tell her brother of them, as he was much too young to know, being the youngest of all. Her boy brother appealed to her heart when they were first left to mourn their mother's loss. The child appeared to feel the bereavement more keenly than most children, and all her care was needed to comfort him. So the young tyrant was indulged in all things, and took all from his sister and father as his right. He had a warm, loving heart, and fully repaid them in affection; and this was the first time Margaret Ward had really been made unhappy by her brother. It was hard, just when he could requite her love and care, he should leave her; and then she had felt so proud and happy in him. She had so often boasted of her boy, and looked forward to the happy day when he should be married to Lucy Cecil. She did hope the poor child would not be unhappy; for Margaret did not doubt but that poor little Lucy Cecil, who was thinking more of her blue eyes than anything else, was already in

love with her brother. John Ward was far from happy on his wedding morning. He did not like to take his sister with him, as he knew Rosa would oppose it violently, and he was too much in love to judge dispassionately. His sister would be so lonely,—her very size appealed to his heart. The Wards had been tall, queenly women, and Margaret was their family name. So when this strangely misnamed little Margaret had come, she still received the same name, though she was sadly in contrast to the former sisters of her race.

"You will be patient with Rosa, for my sake, Margaret? You know I love her so dearly. I would not make you unhappy else!"

"God bless you, John, and make you happy," was her only answer. She could not even speak of her new sister, for her heart was very full.

Even then he might have turned back, as the knot was not yet tied, and he was far from happy. He was more dazzled and bewildered than in love, and he dreaded what his companions would say if he turned back now. He wished Rosa had the ring she had given Giordino; but when he thought of her loving answer he tried to be satisfied. They were to have been married early, at eight o'clock, as the steamer sailed at twelve, and he wanted Margaret to have some time with his wife before they left, so that she should know something of her, and could feel more interested in his letters.

Eight o'clock, and now the quarter past, as he paced up and down, feeling more uncomfortable every moment. The signorina had kept him waiting often, and he had borne it patiently;

but it was different now. "The signorina would be down in a moment,"—so her maid said, but still the moments wore on. "The signorina was sorry, but she had been ill all night, and could not help it." His heart softened when he heard, and he styled himself a brute to expect so much and not to think of her comfort more.

"She was late, but if she were ill, how could she help it?" And the impatient tramp commenced again, as he was but half satisfied. At last—though long after the time—the signorina came, and he felt fully repaid as he looked at her. She was simply dressed—he had nothing to quarrel with in her toilet. Her face was exceedingly pale, and her large lustrous eyes filled with tears as she came toward him, which made her look more lovely than ever. She had delayed till the last moment, trusting for some word from Giordino, and it had never been sent. Her heart was very full—though her tears were all for her old lover, and not one thought for the man that would so soon be her husband. There was not one soft emotion in her heart when she thought of the young man's love she was taking so freely without any hope of return. She was thinking of the future and the comfort it would give her; but there was not one tender feeling for the giver of all that comfort. Even when the ring was placed on her finger and the benediction spoken, Rosa felt more like loathing her lover than ever; and cold were the lips and pallid the face that her husband kissed, as he called her by her new name, so hateful to her, and blessed her for his present happiness.

"Margaret will be waiting,—it is so late, Rosa, my darling wife!"

"I do not intend to see your sister, Mr. Ward, —I am tired." And seeing that she was trying her husband too far, she put her hand to her forehead, that was indeed throbbing and aching. "Go see your sister, John! Tell her I am ill, but give my love. We are late,—hurry back, dear; I will wait for you at the hotel, John." The strain was so great that she could hardly wait, but was pining to get rid of her husband and have one more chance of seeing her lover. So, trying to feel happy and satisfied, the young husband left his wife and hurried to his sister, for their time was very brief. Margaret Ward had dreaded this meeting, as she could hardly tolerate her new sister, and it would be a severe test of her love for her brother to even bear her presence patiently; so there was a heavy weight lifted from her heart when she saw him come alone.

"Rosa was ill, Margaret, and could not come. She is so tired—my poor darling! I am sorry you could not have seen her—she looked so lovely." And even with that unsatisfied want, her brother was very happy.

"It was kind to let you come alone, John; tell her I said so. We could not know each other in so short a time, and I like to have my brother to myself for a brief space before I give him up." And the cold kiss he had taken from his wife was very different from the warm ones showered on him from the loving lips of his sister.

"I have tried you, John, I don't doubt; you know I do not know as much as you do about professionals." And his sister took his hand in hers as he frowned darkly at the name. "I will

try to love your wife, John, and we will forget all the rest—won't we, dear?"

"I wish you had only seen Rosa; you would understand better, Margaret. But wait! Look!" And a beautifully executed miniature was put in his sister's hand. It was a likeness taken for her old lover, and the face was softened and truly lovely that Margaret Ward gazed on. Rosa Bertini had been full of thoughts of her lover when it was taken, and the flashing black eyes were softened as only thoughts of his love could soften them. She had it taken to give Giordino that morning, should he come; but the Italian, dreading a scene, wisely stayed away, and Rosa, as a peace-offering, had given it to her husband. It was simply the head and shoulders, and Rosa had had it taken as her lover remembered her long years ago when he first met her at her father's house. There were no flowers or ornaments, which she delighted so much in; the only thing to relieve it being the long black hair, pushed back from the glowing, beautiful face.

"She is lovely, John!" And she scanned the likeness closely, while a proud, happy smile played round the young husband's lips.

"You should have seen her this morning, Margaret! She was more lovely than I have ever seen her, and, poor darling, she was far from well. Think of all she is giving up for me! The life of excitement, and the homage to which she has been 'accustomed.'"

"I know that, John, and will try and remember; but remember also all you are giving up, and do not spoil your wife by treating it too lightly. You are doing the best thing you can in leaving home, and may be, when you return,

we can make your friends forget the story of your marriage."

Margaret Ward was struggling hard to be kind; she was strangely softened by their parting, and her brother realized the concession she was making. She was so relieved in not being brought in personal contact with his wife, that it appeared comparatively easy. It was not such a parting as might have been expected from two people who loved each other so dearly, and had never been separated before. There was a gulf between them they both recognized, but could not bridge over. John was longing to be gone back to Rosa, still not wanting to appear unkind to his sister by shortening their parting. He was full of loving thoughts of his wife, and the cool tolerance of her name did not satisfy him. He would have liked Rosa to have met Margaret, yet he dreaded that meeting more than he acknowledged to himself. And though he would have liked her to have been with him, he was better satisfied as it was. He felt that he had placed himself in an awkward position; still he did not acknowledge it to himself, and fought against it.

Margaret Ward saw her brother was moved, and though the palliating words hurt her, they were spoken on his account. What had the actress to give up in exchange for the position she had gained in her father's house? A nameless adventuress filling all her brother's heart, and casting out her love and care, that had been his for years. She had found how perfectly ineffectual were all her railings, as she had proved only the night before, and she wanted her brother's last remembrances of her to be

pleasant. She schooled her tongue and tried to be interested in her sister's likeness, and in hearing of her. (And though she acknowledged the beauty of the miniature, when she compared it with Lucy Cecil's pure, girlish face, she wondered still more at her brother's infatuation. So, while she dreaded the parting, and clung to all that was left her, she did not feel at ease, but longed for him to go. That barrier would always be there; he could never be the same to her, and the thought was very bitter. Their parting was hurried over, and her brother left his home to commence his new life.

Their home, as I have said, was on the Hudson River; but this winter, and ever since their father's death, three months of the year, in the coldest weather, were spent in New York. They had a house with every comfort that money could buy; and though Margaret Ward was very ascetic in everything that pertained to herself, anything that had any connection with her brother's comfort could not have too much lavished on it. Therefore their home was perfect in all its belongings. Margaret Ward might dress herself in sack-cloth and cover her head with ashes, for all her brother cared. She could distribute tracts, and read the prayers of the Otaheitan minister all day long, if it gave her any comfort. But even this mortification of the spirit, that she gloried in, could not give the perfect bliss she expected. It was mortifying, but even these perfect prayers, that were to have been her stay, had lost some of their savor.

The house on Twenty-fifth Street was given up, and Miss Ward went back to her summer home, thinking only of keeping all bright and

pleasant for her brother's return, which was so indefinite.

Mr. Ward was a good correspondent, and the letters were long and loving that he wrote her, now that they were separated, and that bone of contention was not brought so constantly before them. He had pretty much his old place in her heart, and their past disputes were forgotten, or if remembered, there was always some excuse ready for him. He wrote long descriptions of the beautiful places and things he saw, and occasionally alluded to his wife. All was brightly tinted in his eyes, as he was very happy in his love.

A year passed away, and still the same glowing letters, with no word of a return. Then the little Rosa was born, and the father's love was all poured into his sister's heart.

Giordino was in New York again, filling another engagement with a new prima donna; and though people had wondered at young Ward's foolishness, it was all forgotten in some new scandal, and many were ready to welcome Mrs. Ward's return to New York.

Meanwhile Rosa, free from Giordino's influence, and touched by the warm love of her husband so freely showered on her, was at last contented, and promised to be a much better woman than she had ever been. Mr. Ward wrote of a return home, but the time had been delayed by his wife, who dreaded meeting her former lover. So the time was put off, as since the little Rosa's birth her husband could deny her nothing. Three years had passed away, and then the loving sister, waiting at home, received news of the coming of a little son, a second John

Ward, to take his father's place. It was not until now that the breach was healed, and the long letter of congratulation was full of love and kind wishes for his wife. Then Mr. Ward's next letter carried a tiny note from Rosa, as even she for the time was touched by the perfect self-abnegation and love of her husband's sister.

Four years passed away, and then five. The letters from abroad were full of the beauty and brightness of his children; but still no time was fixed for their return. Margaret Ward had changed sadly in these last few years. Naturally delicate, the loss of her brother's love preyed on her, and sometimes she feared that she would never see his return. She had lost the aim of her life, and could not fill the blank. She was devoted to her religious duties, and her charities were fast filling up all that was left of the heart that had been so entirely given to her brother. She was jealous even of his love for his children, as putting her further away from him, and so she waited, hoping every letter would speak of his return. Now, however, there was a great change in the letters so eagerly looked for; each one was shorter than the last—cold, formal descriptions of the places he had seen, and an occasional mention of the children; but his wife was never spoken of. His sister wondered and sorrowed over the change, and longed for him the more. There was a great trouble that he could not tell her of; and though he tried to conceal it, and appear the same, her loving heart read only too well. His character was changing, and the first freshness of youth was gone; he was becoming soured and morose, as she could plainly see, but could not help.

Another year passed, and then the shameful story was known: Rosa had left him for her former lover, and he was coming home with his children. It was the agonized outpourings of the strong man's spirit, though he appeared to think more of the shame to himself and children than anything else, as love was long since dead. He did not tell his sister, but by little things the story was more plainly narrated than if he had told it. Rosa had never been the same since her little son's birth; they were in Paris at that time, where she again met her old lover, and he exercised the same baneful influence over her life. The naturally passionate disposition that had so long been held in check, now had full sway, and not only coarse words, but even oaths at times sullied her husband's and children's pure ears. Their nurse, Marietta, did all she could to make them lose their respect and affection for their father; so the children were early tutored to despise everything connected with him. They saw so little of him, and then so little that was pleasant, that the lesson was easily learned.

John Ward turned from both his wife and children and took refuge in dissipation. It was only when his wife left him that he could think of returning home, for he could not bear the shame of taking her with him. She was cold always now, and it was a relief that she was so, as those stormy scenes of passion recurred only too often. The children, wild, elf-like little beings, afraid of their mother, and taught to despise their father, had no resource but in each other. Rosa inherited her mother's beauty and talent for music, and the child could sing anything she heard.

Rosa was practicing all day long, as she intended returning to the stage, though her husband did not know it—he saw so little of her. And the songs that she sang so brilliantly were echoed back by the little mocking-bird, who knew more of her mother's language than her father's. Her mother loved her passionately, and she was the only link to her husband and the only thing that kept her with him. Her baby boy was too much like his father to be a favorite, but her girl's jetty locks and brilliant black eyes reminded her of her Italy—so she said—and they were treasured accordingly.

Sometimes for weeks the child was petted and spoiled, till she owned obedience to no one, and then again, for some childish fault, she was punished and even beaten by her mother, till all that was evil in her nature was aroused. Naturally affectionate, and chilled by both father and mother, she would cling to her nurse, Marietta, to whom she was devotedly attached. Marietta, however, treated the child in the same manner as her mother did—spoiling her at times, and then again treating her with unjust severity, so that all that was beautiful in the child's character was kept in check, while all that deserved blame was fostered. The children, and Rosa especially, bemoaned their mother's loss, but their father cared too little for them to notice their distress—particularly his little Rosa's suffering.

So that they had enough clothes to wear and plenty to eat, he was satisfied; and the poor little forlorn children, taught to despise their new home before they had even seen it, were rather unruly members to introduce to his sis-

ter. Poor little Rosa, who was older than her brother and could better understand, clung to her mother's memory, though it was a forbidden subject, and felt her great loss keenly. It was the only love the child had known, and she dearly treasured it accordingly, as she always remembered her mother now in her happiest moods. "Her dear, beautiful mamma," all day long was the burden of her cry, which Marietta encouraged as much as she could. The more she weaned the child's love from her father, the more chance she had of becoming a permanent member of the family, and Marietta was in much too comfortable quarters to care for change. So Mr. Ward, who could not control them, and was distressed by their noisy lamentations, brought her home with him in self-defense.

CHAPTER III.

EIGHT years had passed since John Ward had bidden good-by to his sister, and now he was again at home. They arrived earlier than they were expected, so his sister was not waiting to receive them, as she had intended. There was a buoyancy of spirits and a freedom of step which he had not known for years, and he wondered at the great change wrought in his feelings. It was a relief to leave the last few years of his life behind him and know that there was nothing in his home to remind him of the past. How much he thanked Providence now that his sister had never known his wife and had not gone with him abroad, as he had wished her to do. Those wild, neglected children were all that remained to recall the past, and he felt it impossible to take any interest in them, for he saw them dreading his presence and avoiding his advances, as taught by Marietta. There was so little that was childlike and lovely to win his love. Hand in hand they were always seen together,—little Rosa fighting her brother's battles and giving him all the love of her wild, passionate heart. Untrained and untaught, she was a strange, wild little girl to bring home to his sister for guidance and protection. Then the child hated everything connected with her father's name, and was so alive to defend her

brother and herself from injustice, that it did not promise to be a very peaceful household.

Taken away from Marietta, who served as a constant reminder and encouraged her in all her rebellion, it might have been possible to win her; but with Marietta it was simply an impossibility. Margaret Ward received her brother and his children with open heart and arms; for the children, as unconnected with their mother, would be very dear to her, especially the last comer—her little baby John. Mr. Ward was a handsomer man at thirty-three than he had been at twenty-five. All that was rough and unformed in the young man had toned down in face and form, if not in disposition; and the face his sister looked on certainly justified all her pride. In the excitement of their first meeting she could not see how cold and morose the man had become, and how little he noticed the two poor, forlorn little strangers who followed him. Rosa, leading her brother by the hand, did not have a father's love to soften the way to nearer acquaintance with her aunt.

"Is this Rosa?" And Aunt Margaret, moved by the tired, and forlorn little faces, stooped over them.

"Yes, and you are Miss Ward." The tutored child raised her face indifferently for her aunt's kiss. So young, only seven years old, but a perfect little woman, eager and ready to resent all slights to either her brother or herself.

"And this is my little John?" She tried to take the boy's hand.

"Not John! Giovannino! Giovannino!" shrieked the child, while she stamped her tiny

foot, and the little boy, holding his sister's hand, echoed her words.

"Vannino! Vannino!—and no John: John is ugly; mamma never say John to Vannino," the baby lips lisped.

"Take those children up stairs directly, Marietta." And their father, troubled by their noise, opened the door.

"Please not just yet papa!" Aunt Margaret tried to smile pleasantly, though she felt disappointed; she had expected so much from this first meeting, and already her brother's children defied her. Her heart warmed to the baby boy, and she would have loved Rosa too in spite of her strong likeness to her mother, if that little lady had permitted. But poor little Rosa, taught by her nurse that she could expect no mercy from her aunt who did not love her beautiful mamma, had rather an unruly temper for any one to manage. The child had a great horror of being whipped and sent to school if she were naughty; for she was very backward with her lessons, and had not yet learned to read. Her mother had tried teaching her when not otherwise employed; and, though she loved Rosa dearly, she was not patient, and the lessons were often connected with coarse words, and even blows, so that it was not strange the child dreaded them.

"Giovannino, won't you come here?" Using the strange name she disliked, to conciliate the child, she made a third attempt.

"I love Rosa." And the little fellow held his sister more tightly, as if afraid of being separated.

"But won't you love me, Vannino?"

"No, me only loves Italy." He looked at his nurse for approval.

"Go to your aunt, naughty boy!" And Marietta, seeing the child was going too far for her own interest, tried to make him loosen his hand.

"No, Rosa go too." The puzzled child, holding his sister tightly by the hand, gave the other to his aunt.

"You will love me, won't you, Vannino?"

"No, me love Rosa." And thinking he had offended before, he again looked for his nurse, but Marietta had left the room.

"Well, sister Rosa is a good little girl." Aunt Margaret took the child's hand.

"No, she is not good one bit." And there was an odd, knowing look in the child's eyes that never should have been there. "I am not good a bit, Miss Ward. Papa says Vannino and I are both little devils. Didn't he, Vannino?"

The boy nodded.

"You must not talk so, Rosa; it is not pretty."

"It is true." The child looked round the room, and seeing her nurse had gone, added in a low voice: "I don't tell lies, but Marietta does."

"Poor child! poor child! what strange training you have had!" Aunt Margaret sighed as she thought she need not now go to Otaheite to find her mission.

"You are tired, my poor little dears, and had better go to your room; we shall know each other better in time."

"No, Vannino not tired. Come, Rosa." And seeing the *étagère* filled with knick-knacks, Miss Ward's especial care, the little fellow started toward it.

"You can look at everything, but you must

not touch them." Their aunt, alarmed for her treasures, followed them, just in time to save a delicate fan from Rosa's eager fingers.

"Oh, how beautiful!" And Rosa held her hand for the fan so far out of her reach in her aunt's hand.

"I want it for Giovannino."

"You can't have it, Rosa; you would break it."

"But I will, I will!" Again the child stamped her foot as she frowned darkly, and held up both hands for the coveted treasure.

"I cannot give it to you, dear; I tell you you would break it. Be a good little girl."

"But I will have it." And seeing her aunt's attention was distracted, and only thinking of gaining her point, Rosa made one spring and caught the fan, which broke in her hand.

"Oh Rosa, Rosa! my beautiful fan!" And Miss Ward was really distressed; while the child, frightened at what she had done, stood quietly by her.

"Are those children here yet?" Their father, who had been making some change in his dress, came in on the scene of contest. "In mischief too again. Margaret, I told you you had better let them go. Rosa, you little devil, where is Marietta?"

"There, didn't I tell you so?" Rosa raised her face defiantly to her aunt's.

"Where is Marietta?" And holding the child, who was struggling to get free, by the hand, Mr. Ward led her to the door—Giovannino following them, screaming at the top of his voice, as he thought his sister was being hurt.

"Me love you, Rosa," said the little sobbing creature, who was hugged close by his sister, as

they struggled up the dark stairs. Two poor, ill-trained, passionate, loving children—how could it be expected that in the life they led they would be any different?

"Me love you Rosa, and me hate papa." This was the happy return to which their Aunt Margaret had looked forward.

"I don't see how you can tolerate those little imps; their squalling is enough to deafen one." And Mr. Ward closed the door.

"Oh, John, John, don't talk so! Poor little things, how could you expect them to know better?"

"Well, I am glad you like them, for it is more than I do."

"Brother, don't talk so. Remember they are your own children, and if they are ill trained, it is not their fault."

"There is no use in being sentimental." Her brother, who had only been at home a few hours, was already frowning at her. "I don't mean to be unkind, but I am tired, and the squalling of those children always puts me out."

"Poor little things, they must be tired too! John is very much like you, brother."

"Do you think so? I don't think you pay me much of a compliment." And he laughed disagreeably, as a picture of the large-eyed, forlorn-looking child presented itself before him. "You cannot expect me to be very affectionate, Margaret." There was a hopeless look in the man's eyes. "I have seen very little of the children the last few years; Marietta does all that is necessary. They are as well as children usually are, and stood the voyage bravely. Rosa is a bright little thing, though she is as saucy as the

devil. Giovannino I hardly know. You must learn to drop that 'John,' Margaret. The child does not know the name, and they have been well trained to despise all that is connected with their father. You must not expect too much from the children of such a woman." And the hot blood of shame mounted to the man's brow.

"I wish you had left that nurse behind; I don't like her looks. I am sure her influence is bad."

"I do not like her either, but there was no help for it. I thought of leaving her, but I had to bring her to satisfy Rosa. You have already found that the little vixen has a will of her own. It is a great deal better to let her have her own way; it is less troublesome, and makes less noise." And Mr. Ward indifferently shrugged his shoulders.

How his sister mourned over the change she could so plainly see! She did not recognize in the cold, sneering man her loving, warm-hearted brother. If he had only taken Lucy Cecil as his wife, how different his life might have been! Oh these little *ifs*, that make up the sum of one's existence! The man's life had changed, and sadly for the worse, since he had left his sister; he had learned to distrust all, and think there was no good to be found in any living creature. His sister, who had waited so patiently for his return, was received coldly; he could even sneer at her now. All this long waiting would find no requital, as she could so plainly see at one glance; and she grew changed too, and had hardly heart to battle with the strong wills of the children when opposed to her own.

Mr. Ward gave all his time, and spent his

money in raising cattle for the State fair, and thoroughbreds for the race-course. He was well known as having the most thoroughly stocked farm in the neighborhood; and no sum was considered too large to lavish on his new hobby. He looked better on his horse than at any other time, and his stables were always well filled. He spent much of his time with his gentleman friends, but always shunned ladies' society. He distrusted the whole sex, and believed that none could be either true or good. So he avoided their society, and when not with his friends, spent most of his time in study; the idle, indulged boy was becoming a studious man. Shut up in his library, he was happy to remain there for hours, and his poor neglected children were never asked for. He had improved in appearance and in mind; but his heart was utterly changed and chilled.

Margaret Ward lived to herself too, interested in her charities and religious duties. Occasionally she attempted some sort of education with her little nephew and niece, but she could not manage them at all, for Rosa set her at defiance, as taught by the nurse, and Giovannino imitated Rosa, so there was little hope of her doing any good. Meanwhile, Rosa and Giovannino, happy in each other, roamed about the grounds, utterly wild and unmanageable. All day long the children would be seen trudging along, hand in hand, always loving and affectionate with each other, but at daggers drawn with every member of the family. Sometimes they would be coaxed into acquaintance by their father's friends, who delighted in hearing Rosa sing, as it was very amusing to hear her little voice imitate her mother's songs so exactly. Her father, when he

discovered these attempts at acquaintanceship, kept her out of the way as much as possible, as she remembered much too vividly her past life, and would be apt to pour the story into the friends' ears; and he naturally wished the past forgotten. Both the children admired their father, and were very happy in everything that belonged to him. Their greatest delight was when they saw him occasionally on horseback.

"He looked so strong and brave," Rosa would say to her brother. "But then you know we hate him, Vannino, for he hates us." And the boy would wisely shake his head. If it had not been for Marietta's counteracting influence, they would soon have learned to love him in spite of discouragements. The woman knew, however, that if the breach were healed, her place would be gone, as she only controlled them by fear; and there were many things the little ones would have told, as Rosa, with a child's perfect frankness, would not long have kept the secret.

The children were very happy, in spite of Marietta's unkindness and want of love; for, after being shut up in a close city, the sense of freedom was great happiness—and then the country was an ever-varying source of pleasure.

Their new home was not beautiful according to strict architectural rules. It was of stone, very massively built, and more for comfort than beauty. It was surrounded on all sides by porticos wide and deep; just the place for smoking and spending a summer's evening pleasantly. The house was built much higher than the ground surrounding it, so that the ground was terraced down till it was on the same level. All around it, and in the grounds, were the most magnificent old trees,

the growth of ages, which were a never-failing source of amusement to the children; for the little red and large gray squirrels had their homes in them, and were always ready for the nuts Rosa and Giovannino had in their pockets for them. Then the birds, too, rivaled Rosa's songs; and sometimes she would wonder if her mother meant the country when she called her her bird, and if she meant she was like one of those beautiful, happy little birds she never tired of looking at.

Both the children were sweet-tempered and affectionate naturally; but every one had grown to think them quite the reverse, and took so little interest in them that they were growing up very differently from what they would have done if differently treated. They lived very much by themselves, and grew more wild and unruly every day, till at last their aunt, tired by her repeated endeavors with so little result, and not satisfied that they should grow up as they were doing, determined to speak to their father, with what result we will see in another chapter.

CHAPTER IV.

MR. WARD had just come from the State fair, feeling proud and self-complaisant, as he had received much praise for his contributions in the way of stock. His beautiful little Alderney cows that he was so proud of had won the first prize; and his Cashmere goats were equally as much admired, and received the same honors.

It was a warm summer day—not too warm to be uncomfortable, but just the weather for the fair; and as Mr. Ward stopped to tell his sister of his success, he was in the best spirits possible. Usually his way lay directly to his study from the stables, but as Margaret had taken much interest in the pretty soft-eyed pets, he knew she would be glad to learn their merits had been appreciated by others. He did not mean to be unkind to his sister, and did not realize how lonely her life was. She was not a pleasant companion, being often irritable, and he did not realize that she was growing old. She had been disappointed in her brother, but did not let him see where the trouble lay, but blamed other things, and vented her displeasure on them. Every one was to blame but John, for he was still her idol. It was John's horses and dogs, his house and furniture. Everything was her brother's, and she herself had only an identity in her own mind as being his

sister. But to go back: Mr. Ward stopped at the door of his sister's sitting-room to tell her of his good fortune.

"Margaret, the Alderneys have won the first prize, and the Cashmeres also."

"Have they, John? I am very glad. But do come in, and don't hold the door open; I feel quite a draught."

"A draught to-day, Margaret? Why, you have all the windows down. No, I thank you—I am not coming in. I am not a salamander."

"John, I have something very important to say to you. Do come in and shut that door."

"I will be obliged to have the window up, or I shall smother." And he threw up the sash, letting in the warm summer air.

"Do put that window down, brother." Miss Ward tied her handkerchief round her neck, while she pulled her shawl over her shoulders. "I am sure I will have an attack of neuralgia, sitting in this air."

"Well—there, then." The window was put down. "Say all you have to say quickly—I can't stand this long." And he stood impatiently waiting. "Ugh! I shall smother. No wonder you are never well, Margaret, living in this heated air."

"I think I could stand the window being up now, dear." Miss Ward put on her head a woolen hood she had been busy mending, while she pulled her shawl more closely round her shoulders, and retired to one corner.

"I wish you could see yourself, Margaret." And Mr. Ward laughed as he threw up the window. "Barnum would not have to go far to find a mummy."

"Oh John, John! why did you bring those heavy boots in here? Just look at my beautiful velvet carpet! Charlotte says it is almost impossible to get those stains of red clay out of that delicate white ground."

"Bother, Margaret! What is the carpet for, if not for use?" And he was busy scraping the offending red clay off with his riding whip.

"Don't, dear, don't! I will ring for Charlotte!" She put her hand on the bell. "Charlotte, your master has been to the fair and brought it home with him." And she pointed ruefully to the mud, for, though feeling provoked, she could not be angry with her brother.

"Charlotte, there's a good girl; run up stairs and get my slippers." And Mr. Ward kicked off first one boot and then the other, while muttering something about feeling very much like a bull in a china shop. Mr. Ward was very well satisfied to-day, and the surprised girl, on her return with the slippers, was greeted with a smile and word of thanks. It was seldom that he noticed his servants except to scold them; but he was a good and just master, never requiring anything unreasonable. His few words of approval were dear to his servants, therefore the girl's face was very bright as she left the room.

"So the Alderneys received the first prize? Pretty creatures! I am sure they deserved it."

"Yes, Livingston had his there too; but mine were the finest by all odds." And a satisfied smile played round their owner's lips. "I stopped at his place as I came along; he is fitting it up beautifully."

"I wonder if the reports are true about Ralph. I should think any girl would fall in love with

him, he is such a handsome young man, and has such a beautiful place."

"How worldly-wise you women all are, Margaret!" And Mr. Ward's lip curled. "You need not trouble yourself about Ralph, he will never be in love for more than a week at a time."

"Did you carry off all the prizes from Ralph, brother?"

"No; he was far ahead of me in fruit. You should have seen his grapes! But, by-the-way, Roger is bringing some he sent you in the hamper."

"That was very thoughtful in Ralph. Ralph is always thoughtful." And a pleased smile played round her lips.

"Do you remember that aunt he stayed with in Savannah some years ago? Don't you remember the funny accounts he gave us of the way in which she managed her second husband, Ralph's uncle? Well, this Henry Livingston died about a year ago, leaving one daughter by a former marriage to the care of her step-mother, his wife. This daughter, it appears, is quite an heiress, inheriting her money in some way from her mother. She had been away at school ever since her father's second marriage, but came home after her father's death. Ralph and his mother have always had an idea of having this girl with them some time; Ralph thinks she might in part have filled his sister Helen's place. It appears, however, that the step-mother drew the reins too tightly, and she ran away from home, and no one knows where she is. Ralph did not know anything about it till he saw a long notice in the paper, and they have shown great stupidity in not describing her very accurately. She is quite

young, and a beauty too, I suppose. Ralph and yourself will appreciate the romance."

"But, brother, did they give any reason for her running away?"

"No, of course not; but Ralph thinks in some way this old termagant has been trying to get hold of her money, or do something outrageous. He will not believe the most natural conclusion, that the girl ran away to marry some worthless fellow her friends did not approve of. You know Ralph is chivalrous, so he is quite in love already with the unfortunate one, and has a lance in rest for any knight who comes to dispute her beauty and worth." It was seldom his sister found him inclined to talk, so she looked very well pleased as she listened to him.

"But, John, don't they mention the girl's name?"

"Why, you are quite as much interested as Ralph." And Mr. Ward, tired of the subject, yawned. "I believe her name was Helen; yes, Helen Livingston. You know she would be Ralph's first cousin; their fathers were brothers. It is the most fortunate thing that Ralph and his mother have never seen her, and have not had her staying with them, as she would have given them no end of trouble."

"But, brother, it may be as Ralph thinks. Poor Mrs. Livingston will be so much disappointed; she has so often spoken to me of this niece who had the same name as her daughter, and who she hoped some day to have with her."

"How full of nonsensical ideas you women always are! But what did you want to see me so much for?"

"John, dear." And knowing she was approaching a disagreeable subject, his sister hesitated. "I am very much worried about the children."

"Well, what's up now?" His face lost all that had been cheerful in it. "Has Rosa broken more cups and saucers, or has Giovannino finished the rest of those preserves you had forbidden him to touch? They are regular little devils as I told you when I brought them here, and the only thing to do, if they are too troublesome, is to shut them out as I do. Give them rope enough and they will hang themselves some time, never fear." And all that was hard and relentless in the man, shone in his face.

"Brother, how can you talk so of your own children? I think if they had not been so neglected they would have been good children; and it is this very neglect that worries me."

"Well, have it any way to suit yourself, Margaret; I am sure I don't care. They are the most unruly little cubs I have ever seen, and I think it is all waste time trying to comb them. But, Margaret,"—and he frowned,—“we have tried the governess plan, and I give you fair warning I will not have another Miss Moore, with her dirty, flaunting dresses, making love to the gardener, and even your humble servant."

"John, you know I would not have another Miss Moore for the world, as she did them more harm than good."

"Well, how about Miss Staley; did you like her?"

"We have been unfortunate, and I am almost afraid to try again. If my health only permitted I might do more myself, but you know very well

how little I can do, and I am ashamed to let the children grow up as they are doing."

"Well, Margaret, though I do appear so indifferent, I often am troubled, and do not feel wholly satisfied as to the way those children will turn out. I would like to give the poor little wretches some chance, so that they would not reproach me at a future day. They do not take to me naturally, or I would care for them more. Rosa is a bright little thing, and I am mortified when I think the child does not even read decently, though she is eight years old."

"And John, too, brother," Aunt Margaret, with whom the little one was the favorite, jealously reminded him.

"Giovannino? Well, I don't think his brains will ever trouble him. I never see him but that he is squalling, and that does not make him very attractive. Rosa is a bright, fearless little thing, and one cannot help admiring the pluck she always shows. Ralph met her the other day down in the lower meadows, trudging along as usual, with Giovannino at her heels. (I wonder the child has patience with him.) Well, Ralph, as I have said, met her, and was trying to tease her brother, which as usual she resented. Then he wanted to know whose little girl she was, and why she was left to go about alone. The little thing spoke up like a regular young tiger-cat in my defense, telling whose child she was; and she had a dirty face, and tramped about because she liked it. And then she entered into a long description of your humble servant, and the splendid way in which I rode; but the little devil spoiled all by adding: 'You know we hate him, sir.' And of course Giovannino nodded."

The little story was told in a sneering way, but there was a moved look in the man's face, showing it only wanted time and a different influence to bring back his old love for his children. "They are a precious pair of unwashed and uncombed young cubs, and have learned their lesson of hate well."

"But, John, do you think it wise or right to let them grow up as they are doing?"

"Bother the wise or right! How can you make it different? I tell you plainly, Margaret, I won't have another Miss Moore, or any of her kind. I should be very glad if I could get a lady to fill the place for Rosa's sake. There is something taking in that child, she is such a good little hater."

"But, brother——"

And seeing a pained look in his sister's face, he added:

"I will tell you what I will do, Margaret, just to please you. I am going to New York with Ralph to choose his new tandem harness; we expect to be gone a week—so while there I can kill two birds with one stone. I will put an advertisement in the paper for a governess, and see what will be the result. I do not care for accomplishments, or anything of that sort; I simply want a lady. Do not entertain any hope of a good result, as I am very decided on that point, and ladies do not appear to be in that style of business nowadays."

"Well, brother, I hope you will be successful, as it would be a great relief to me. If I could separate little John from his sister, I might have some hope of winning his heart; but Rosa is so passionate, and the boy imitates her so exactly,

there is little hope of my gaining any influence over him."

"There goes the little scamp now." And their father leaned out of the window as Giovannino ran past to join his sister, who was holding the gate open for him.

"Johnnie, Johnnie, come here, dear!" his aunt called; but the little figure hurried on, not heeding. But as his father called to him, the child stopped instantly.

"Don't you hear your aunt calling you? Come here, sir."

"Nobody called Vannino;" and the little fellow looked at his father. "I'm goin' to Rosa."

"Go and tell Rosa to come here—I want her." Mr. Ward laughed as he drew in his head. "You see there is no use in your persisting in that name—the child won't answer it."

"It is all Rosa's doing." And Miss Ward frowned. "You should correct the child. Where have you been, Rosa?"—as the two children entered the room—"where have you been, Rosa, to soil your apron so?"

"Gathering berries."

"And me too," said Vannino.

"Did you bring any for me, Johnnie?" And Aunt Margaret held out her hand coaxingly, while a smile played round their father's lips. The child stood perfectly stolid, not heeding her, but drawing his sister's attention to the flowers on the carpet. "Johnnie, dear, don't you hear me?" His aunt took a very dirty little hand in her own.

"Me hate John—me Vannino!"

"Sister Rosa is a naughty little girl to teach you such things."

"Rosa is good—and Rosa not teach! Me loves Rosa!" And the dirty little face was pressed close to his sister's.

"But you will love me too, won't you, dear?"

"No, no! me loves Rosa—me loves Rosa!"

"But why won't you love me too?"

The child only clung to his sister, with the same words for answer: "Me loves Rosa—me loves Rosa!"

"I know"—and there was a knowing look in Rosa's eyes—"Vannino loves me because—" and the child looked round the room as though she were afraid of being heard—"because Rosa never beats him."

"But who would hurt either of you, Rosa? You should not say such things."

"Oh, nobody!" Afraid she had said too much, Rosa held her brother more closely to her. "Rosa loves Italy, and Vannino loves Rosa and Italy too."

Their aunt sighed as she thought, if the children would only forget. It was wonderful how well they remembered when they were still so young; she never dreamt of Marietta's influence. "Rosa, papa is going to bring a new lady home to teach you."

"Oh, don't, don't!" And the child laid her hand on her aunt's in her eagerness. "I don't want to learn."

"But it will be some one good and kind, that you will love."

"Like mamma?" And the little face brightened.

"She will be good and kind, and Rosa would like to know how to read."

"No, no!" And remembering her former lessons, the little rebellious fists were clinched.

"But she will be very, very kind."

"And not tell lies?"

"No, dear; she will be good, and very kind."

"And beautiful like mamma?"

"Yes, beautiful like mamma," Miss Ward said, to please the child.

So the two devoted friends were soon out again; tramping through the grounds, and building castles about the lady who was coming to teach them—"who would be good and kind, and beautiful like mamma, and would not tell lies."

CHAPTER V.

MR. WARD was going by the two o'clock train to New York, and as it is only ten now, he has two or three hours of hard work to be accomplished before he will be ready. There is a large pile of letters waiting to be answered, and the morning papers are still unopened, he having found no time to read them. His study is a very handsome room, though it hardly deserves the name, so incongruous are its surroundings. The walls are covered with dark-green velvet paper, and the walnut of the doors and wainscot harmonize with the paper, and add richness to the whole. The beauty of the room is, however, entirely marred by the disorder that reigns therein.

On the floor, just under his feet, are his thick riding-gloves, where he had thrown them as he took them off; and on the table, in the midst of his letters and papers, is a box with different kinds of assorted grain and feed; a new riding-whip, with a different lash from what is generally used, is there too; as also a large ball of strong cord, and a heavy pair of iron scissors, with a package of new fish-hooks; a book is by them, on the subject of baits and the best way to use them. His coat is thrown carelessly across a chair; and we can see very plainly that he has not brushed his hair since he took his hat off. His hand is covered with ink stains, showing

that he is not an elegant penman; and the whole aspect of the room is careless and disordered. The housemaid has found it impossible to keep anything in order in his particular province, as it only calls down rebuke on herself for needless interference. The necessary sweeping and dusting once a week is done, as Miss Ward is a good housekeeper; but that is all the attention the room receives.

Mr. Ward has a strangely assorted library. All the books generally to be found in a library are there, but far up on the top shelves, quite out of his reach; while down below, in more convenient places, are to be found Frank Forrester, and other sporting novels, and works on the different modes of training horses and raising cattle. There are quantities of books all on the same subject; and on looking at his library you can see how large an interest in his life his farm holds. Long treatises on the different times and seasons for planting grain, different ways of breaking-in horses, and even a book on bees—their hives, the best time for collecting honey, and what flowers they prefer.

The pile of letters is decreasing rapidly as the seals are broken, and one after another is answered—some only requiring a few lines, and others taking a full page; while others are put aside as requiring a longer consideration, but most frequently they are thrown into the grate, as not requiring any answer at all. At last they are all disposed of, and he throws himself back in his chair, running his hand through his hair—yawns, and stretches himself in a delighted feeling of freedom. Mr. Ward is not a good scribe, and the letters have been collecting for

several days, and are put off as usual till the last moment. He is more at home on his horse, or in the field with his men, giving directions and seeing them carried out, than with a pen in his hand. He is always irritable when such occupation is necessary, and the days in the study are stamped with a black mark by all the household, who keep out of his way as much as possible.

He yawns again, and stretches himself in pure enjoyment of the rest he has earned, and then looks at his watch to see how much time is left. Half-past eleven; one hour and a half left—and he puts out his hand lazily for the morning paper. He reads slowly about the rise and fall of grain and the state of the money market; then he turns to the amusements, for Ralph and himself may, if not otherwise employed, go to the theater; then the European news is looked at. Suddenly the listless figure becomes erect, and every nerve is strained, while the white teeth are set over the under lip till the blood starts from their firm pressure. The paper is put down, then taken up and read over and over again. That one little passage of only twelve lines! He appears unconscious of what he is about as his finger traces the lines slowly, one after another. He is trying to chain his mind down and realize what is plainly printed before him. There is a vacant look in his eyes as he sits perfectly unconscious of what he is about, staring at vacancy. There is a noise heard outside—the housemaid going past the door—and the man awakens to the reality.

"Saved, saved! I am free, free!" And a wild light of joy shone in his face, as he

snatched the paper up again, his eyes greedily taking in the words. Then the door was closed behind him, and quick, impatient footsteps were heard echoing along the marble floor of the hall.

"Margaret, are you alone?" He opened his sister's door and put his head in the room.

"Yes, John dear. What is it?" And frightened by his face, his sister hastened to him.

"Margaret, read that, and tell me I am not dreaming!" He pressed his finger down on the column of the paper he held in his hand, while his sister read: "Died in Naples (and then followed the date), the Signorina Rosa Bertini, in the fortieth year of her age." A long description of her merits as a singer followed; but the story of her life and marriage was forgotten, or purposely omitted by the writer.

The cholera raged in the year 1850 in Naples, and the Signorina Rosa Bertini was one of its first victims. Dying away from her false lover, who had deserted her, the woman richly deserved the sad ending to her life. No husband and children to mourn her death, but only joy and gladness that at length the burden of shame was lifted. The woman who had so sinned against him could never trouble him more.

"John, my brother!" And his sister held him tightly, while she sobbed on his shoulder, more moved to all appearance than her brother, who was at last released. "I never told you how I felt the shame, dear; but God is always merciful; and let us strive to show ourselves grateful for that mercy." Heartfelt and thankful were the prayers of both brother and sister as they knelt together and prayed as they had not

done since they were children—prayed for the misguided woman who had so nearly wrecked his life, and the poor little neglected children who still felt the weight of her influence. Then he rose to his feet, ashamed of his emotion; and his sister grieved to see he was still the same cold, changed brother she had only known the last two years. The strong emotion had loosened the floodgates for a time, but the work of years was not to be undone in a moment; and though there was a relief and freedom about his actions that had not been there before, and a new light of hope shone in his eyes, he was still the same cold, cynical man she did not know. "I have only an hour left." He pulled out his watch and put on his mark of indifference again, showing plainly his heart was not yet melted. "Have you anything you want done in town, Margaret?" He tried to conceal his emotion.

"But the children, John!" His sister hesitated. "What shall I do?"

"About the governess?" willfully misunderstanding her.

"John, you know what I mean, will you tell them about——" She paused.

"Out with it, Margaret! You need not hesitate; I can bear the truth." And provoked with himself for not braving the subject, and letting her do it for him, he impatiently walked toward the door.

"Do you want them to know? Shall I tell them?"

"No! in Heaven's name, no!" He was provoked, sore, and irritated by her persistence, as he could not feel wholly glad on hearing the

news. He impatiently paced up and down. "She has been dead to myself and to them for two years now, and so let it be. It would do no good to rake up the embers that have been smouldering so long. I hope with all my heart," and he bit his lip to suppress a worse word, "that the past is forgotten, and no one remembers the shameful story. Marietta was strongly attached to her mistress, and would be greatly distressed. Fortunately she cannot read, and will not know; for if she did she would only revive all I wish forgotten. Leave the poor little wretches alone, and they may in time forget. Rosa is of too passionate a nature, and remembers too vividly to be told with impunity. If she hates her father, she loved her mother with all her heart, and there would be no end of trouble with her. As to mourning and all that stuff, I don't believe in it—it would attract attention and call forth idle questions, and then she was not worthy of the respect. Poor Rosa!" And his eyes softened for a moment. "She harmed herself more than she did me; but I cannot forgive her—she has blighted my whole life."

"Not too late yet, John!" His sister restrained the passionate hand that was breaking the delicate ivory paper-cutter it held. "It is not too late! It is never too late to commence a new life, and with God's help you will do it."

"Don't hope it, Margaret. I am not the same man I was, and I have those little imps ever to remind me."

"Yes, brother, always to remind you and humble your pride; but to show you, with God's assistance, a truer, a nobler path. There is hope

always for us poor sinners, if we only fight the good fight bravely; trusting in and through His will He will help us at last. Let past sins only serve as stepping stones to climb higher; strengthened through suffering so would I wish my brother." And Margaret Ward smiled proudly, as the light of hope shone through her eyes, dimmed with tears of emotion. "You are not maimed in body but strong, and hope will strengthen your spirit too. There has been a black cloud over our lives, but the sun is shining out again brighter and more beautiful than I ever have seen it. Is it not so with you?"

"You are true, at least, Margaret." He pressed her to his heart, while the hot tears, so strange to his eyes, rained down on her bowed head. "God bless you, Margaret, and keep you true, so that I do not again lose my faith. We have been dreaming long enough." He straightened himself up again. "I must not miss the train, as I promised Ralph, and would not like to disappoint him. Have you any commands, Margaret,—any worsteds to be selected or dresses bought?—as you gave me directions last time, and what fine work I made of it! Take care of those little imps of mine; and tell Rosa I will bring the crossiest governess I can find, to keep her in order. There is my horse! Good-by, Margaret." He kissed his sister, who stood watching him.

"Andy, exercise the bay and chestnut well, and turn the colt down in the lower pasture; I noticed she had broken down several of the fences." And giving a long string of orders to his groom, to be carried out in his absence, Mr. Ward mounted and rode off at full speed, for

he was late and did not want to disappoint his friend.

"Poor fellow!" His sister wiped away the quickly-falling tears. "He has had a hard life; but, thank God, he is free at last." And very fervent were the prayers she sent to heaven for their future happiness and peace. All the past was obliterated, and he would commence his life again—if not as heart-whole and trusting, wiser and better able to understand others. We hope that the aunt's prayers would be heard, and that his poor little children would come in changed for the better in the new life opening to all.

Ralph wondered much at his friend's conduct on their way to New York. Sometimes his companion was gloomy, and then again he would laugh wildly, and appeared to be bubbling over with happiness. At last Ralph could stand it no longer. "There is something the matter, Ward. I do not want to be intrusive, but I am a very old friend!"

"Why, have you not seen the morning paper?" And Mr. Ward leant over and took it out of his bewildered companion's hand.

"No! that new harrow was bothering the men, and I have been out with them all the morning. We gentlemen farmers do not have much leisure."

"How is your mother, Ralph? I have not seen her for a long time." And he folded the paper down under the few lines that had brought so much comfort with them.

"She is better, thank you, and said she would go over and spend the day with your sister, as it promised to be so fine. But what is this?" His attention was instantly riveted. "God bless you, John!" And the tears stood in his eyes, as

the two friends, who had known each other since they were boys, locked their hands in a warm clasp. "I am almost as glad as if it had happened to myself! Are the children to know? Excuse me, John; it was a foolish question. I understand." As his friend's face flushed, he hastily changed the subject, and they were soon deeply interested in discussions about their relative farms. The fair was talked over too, and they congratulated each other on their good fortune in receiving first prizes.

"I have a queer commission from Margaret. I should not wonder if we have a companion home with us."

"Why, what do you mean, old fellow? No more practical jokes, I protest."

"No; but Margaret has sent me on a wild-goose-chase; she is not satisfied with the children, but wants another governess to keep them in order."

"Well, what do you propose to do?"

"Put an advertisement in the paper, 'Wanted, a governess,' and so on. I do not care for accomplishments, but I want a lady, and some one with a pretty determined will, to conquer Rosa. The child is growing more unmanageable every day, and if she goes on as she is doing, I don't know where she will end."

"She is a bright little thing, John, and I think that Italian is more to blame for her unruliness than you think."

"I do not doubt it, Ralph; but what is to be done? Margaret cannot manage her any more than a child; and I dread those stormy scenes of passion so much that we keep Marietta more for peace sake than for anything else."

"I hope we shall not meet with another Miss Moore." Ralph laughed.

"Preserve us from such a fate!" And Mr. Ward laughed too at some amusing remembrance. "Have you any idea where you will get your harness, Ralph?"

"No; I shan't go to —," mentioning the name of some firm. "They cheated me confoundedly the last time I was there. I do not want anything showy, but something strong, as I see those grays are going to give me a great deal of trouble. I intended letting mother have them, but I am afraid they will never be broken in."

"What do you say to a trade for my bays? Minna has gone blind in one eye and Jetta stumbles. I don't know what Margaret will do, she is such a coward, and her pets are only good for light farm work now. They were the prettiest team we ever had, and Margaret was very much attached to them. I should have them turned out to spend their old age in clover, if they were not so confoundedly tricky and did not break down the fences so abominably that I had to give it up. Standing in the stable makes them stiff, and so I have to make them work in self-defense, as Roger has too much else to attend to to see them exercised properly. Here we are at last!" as the train stopped. "The Brevoort, I suppose?"

"Yes, that will do." And arm-in-arm the two friends were soon walking up Broadway.

CHAPTER VI.

IN one of the upper streets of New York—Twenty-sixth or Twenty-seventh, I don't exactly remember which, as the house has been pulled down—was a small brick house, only two stories high. It was very old, and everything about it, though in perfect repair, was just as when it was first built. The door-step was of dazzling whiteness, and the brass plate on the door, if the sun had only shone out, would have reflected back its bright rays; but as it is nearly dark, that is impossible.

Miss Davenant, as we read on the door-plate, teacher of French, music, and drawing, must be a good housekeeper, as everything is in such excellent order. The pure white curtains are in the most perfect state of crispy, firm stiffness, and the grate-fire, which is reflected through the window, is burning slowly and fitfully, though it is summer. It has been a damp summer, and the location is damp too, though that hardly accounts for it satisfactorily. The grate-fire and its surroundings tell the story plainly. Miss Davenant must be an old maid, fussy, and as much averse to cold as Miss Ward. No young unmarried lady would live alone in that independent style; and if there were a male individual in the house, he, with the natural impudence of his sex, would certainly have his own name there instead of his wife's—that is, if he were worth anything.

Some men—though I am thankful there are not many—are, and like to be supported by their sisters, wives, or mothers; but we will take the most natural view of the subject, which is the true one after all.

There is a young girl's face gazing out into the darkness, with a serious, troubled look; and as the face is very lovely, we pause, interested enough to inquire into the subject of her trouble. A lady of about sixty is seated at the table counting her stitches; she is crocheting, and as it is nearly dark, she must be very careful in order to avoid dropping her stitches. The usually placid face is troubled too, as every now and then she looks at her companion.

"Gertrude dear, won't you come away from the window? the room is not as warm now."

"I am very comfortable, thank you, Miss Davenant," as she brushed away a tear.

"Gertrude, come here, poor child. You must not despond. You lose hope too readily."

"But, Miss Davenant, I have had that advertisement in the paper every day for a week, and still no answer."

"Nonsense, dear! I could tell you of many a more serious disappointment than your own; we cannot expect an answer as quickly as we want." And Miss Davenant smiled cheerfully. "I am very glad to have you with me, dear, and you are so much like your mother it brings back the old days. Do not begrudge me a little pleasure. You cannot tell how your young face gladdens me."

"Dear dear mamma—oh, if they knew! And papa, how little he knew how things would be!"

Her eyes filled with tears. "You don't think I have been wrong?"

"No, dear; I wish I knew more of the law, but I can inquire, if you like."

"No, please don't—promise me, Miss Davenant." And the young girl grasped her hand eagerly. "I am so very much afraid of being traced."

"Well, I won't; don't distress yourself and look so frightened, dear child. It will not be long."

"No, not very."

"You may get into a nice family, and be as happy as I was when I was with your mother. A governess's life is not generally agreeable, but there are exceptions to every rule, and yours may prove an exception." And Miss Davenant entered into a long discussion of the comparative merits and demerits of the case, in which her young friend was deeply interested, and soon forgot her trouble.

"I am so glad you do not blame me, and that I had some one to come to. That old diary of mamma's I told you of was full of many loving remembrances of you." She pressed the hand she held in hers to her cheek.

"Your mother was my best friend, dear. I owe my present home and all I have of comfort to her kind care. I hope, dear, you may be as fortunate in finding kind friends, as you will not stay with me. I am afraid, Gertrude, your advertisement was not full enough—you might have tried something more. You know the usual style."

"I could not put in anything to make people

expect too much. You know I have no experience in teaching."

"Well, dear, we will see what to-morrow will bring; I certainly cannot quarrel with anything that keeps you with me." And she caressingly stroked the soft brown hair, as the girl raised her large dark eyes to her face. "But what did the shopping of this morning result in?"

"I bought so many things!" She leaned eagerly forward. "I have a gray merino; I will want it soon. And then I bought a pink silk."

"What for, Gertrude?"

"It was so beautiful."

"But what will you, as a governess, do with a pink silk?"

"Oh, I forgot!"—as with a vexed face she bit her lip. "I am afraid you will think I am very silly and vain; but I have never had one," hesitatingly. "And it was so pretty, I really could not help it. And then I forgot." Her companion watched her with an amused face.

"But what else did you buy?"

"I have two more plain dresses, and some muslins, and a black silk—that is always useful." She looked at Miss Davenant for approval.

"Yes, dear, that was sensible. But what else?"

"I have boots and gloves, and a bonnet trimmed with gray." And she looked more sure of approval this time. "It is not a bit becoming. I wish I could have a rose or something in it, it would not look so plain."

"Why could you not, Gertrude?"

"Do you really think I might? It would make it look so much better. I do wonder if I could have a hat—I have always worn one?"

"That depends very much on where you are going. If in the country, I think you might, if it is not too gay."

"I should be so glad. But I must learn to be more dignified. I do wish my hair did not curl; I tried so hard to smooth it back plainly this morning, but did not succeed. I am afraid no one will like me, as I do not look old enough. Every one will think I would not be steady enough, as they do not know." And she was too much interested to notice Miss Davenant's amusement as she watched her serious face.

"Don't think too much about that, Gertrude; there is a great deal of chance in such things. Some persons might think your youth an advantage."

"Do you really think they would?"

"Yes, why not? I was very young when I commenced teaching myself."

"Miss Davenant, you are so kind, and give me so much hope."

"But, Gertrude, how has the money lasted?"

"I have not spent all." She drew out her pocket-book, and counted her little fortune.

"I am glad you can afford the pink silk."

"I am afraid you will think I was very silly."

"No, dear; on the whole, I think you have done very well. Experience is usually more dearly bought than it has proved in your case. There is the bell. I wonder if Jane has come in yet? I sent her out with a letter. But wait, I will go." Putting her work on the table, she rose to go to the door.

"Let me. You are cold, Miss Davenant." And not waiting for permission, Gertrude was already in the entry.

"Is Miss Lyle in?"

"Yes, sir." And Gertrude, whose heart was beating very fast, held the door open.

"Can I see her?"

"Yes; please come in, sir."

"Miss Lyle." And Mr. Ward, for it was he, walked toward the elder lady. "Miss Lyle, I believe."

"No, this is Miss Lyle. Gertrude dear." She put her hand on the young girl's shoulder.

"I came in answer to an advertisement. You are very young."

"No, sir, I am older than I look; I will be nineteen next month." And then remembering she should be dignified, she checked herself, while Mr. Ward could hardly help smiling; it was very much as though a child were playing governess. "Shall I play something for you? I have had a great deal of care taken with my music. I was educated in Paris," mentioning the name of a *pension* that was well known. "I am very fond of children, and I don't dislike the country." The sentences came out in eager gasps, as she was very anxious of pleasing.

"I do not care for accomplishments, as my children are too young to make it needful at present. I think you might suit me, as you do not dislike the country."

"I am very glad that you are satisfied, sir, as I like the country so much better than the city. And I like little girls so much better than boys." She had entirely forgotten, in her agitation, that he had not mentioned his children particularly.

"But they are not girls."

"If they are not too old, I am very fond of

little boys too." And she bit her lip in vexation, while Miss Davenant smiled.

"But they are not boys."

"Oh!" She raised a puzzled face, while he could not help smiling.

"I have a little boy, and a girl too." And seeing she was uncomfortable, he kindly added: "Rosa and Giovannino, my children, have quite run wild, as my sister, who lives with me and keeps house for me, does not understand managing them. I am afraid you will have some trouble with them, but if you are willing to try, I am satisfied." And Mr. Ward, pleased by her sweet face, and satisfied that he had at last found a lady, turned to Miss Davenant for her approval.

"If, as you say, sir, your children need more of a softening influence, and you are pleased with Gertrude, I think she will answer nicely. Some persons might consider her age an objection; but the young usually take to the young, and in that case her youth may be an advantage. She is a dear, good child, and I hope you will treat her kindly." Miss Davenant's eyes filled with tears as she laid her hand on Gertrude's shoulder. "Your wife——"

"My wife died abroad," he quickly interrupted, and then added, "My sister keeps house for me, and will be a kind friend to Miss Lyle. I think she will like her new home, as I have one of the most beautiful places on the Hudson. We live very quietly, but——"

"Oh, I shall like that!" Gertrude, who had recovered her discomfiture, quickly interrupted. "I have always lived quietly, and I love the

country." Her bright face certainly contradicted her first assertion.

"Well, Miss Lyle,"—having settled the business part of the arrangement with Miss Davenant, he took up his hat preparatory to going,— "when will you be ready to go with me? I can wait a few days longer, if necessary, as I have a friend staying in the city, and could fill up my time very well. This is Tuesday—could you be ready by Friday?"

"Yes, sir, I think I could." And she looked at Miss Davenant.

"Yes, Gertrude, I think you could, to oblige Mr. Ward, though I am sorry to lose you so soon."

"Then Friday, if you will meet me at the C— Street depot at two o'clock."

"I will be ready, sir." Gertrude, who was not entirely at her ease, held out her little hand stiffly.

"Good evening, ladies!" And Mr. Ward, bowing to both, left them; but having some trouble in opening the door, Miss Davenant, glad of an excuse for a few more words in her charge's favor, was with him in the entry.

"It was kind, coming yourself, sir, instead of sending a deputy, as a personal interview is so much more satisfactory. Gertrude is very young,—you will treat her kindly." And in her anxiety she laid her hand on his arm.

"Yes, I can promise my sister's sympathy. I am very little at home myself, and rarely see the children; but Margaret is always at home, and she will do all she can for Miss Lyle's comfort. You must excuse me if I appear hurried,

I have a friend waiting for me. He raised his hat. "Friday at two."

"Yes, sir; Gertrude will meet you at the depot at that time."

"I like his face very much, Miss Davenant; he is very handsome."

"Do you think so, dear? That is hardly necessary to your comfort, I should think."

"No, of course not. But one can't help being good looking, and it is pleasanter to be handsome than ugly." She bit her lips in vexation. "I am afraid he thought I was not very wise, as he said I was young."

"I think you must not expect too much; he would not have engaged you unless he were satisfied."

"Yes, that is true." And she appeared relieved.

"I think he hardly noticed you particularly enough. He appears to me to be a man who at some period of his life has had a great trial to bear. Did you notice how soon he changed the subject when I mentioned his wife?"

"No. Did he? How very interesting! Do tell me all you think about him?" And as anxious as a child for a story, she bent forward eagerly.

"Gertrude!" Miss Davenant shook her head. "You must remember and be more dignified. I am afraid I will have to write 'gouvernante' on a card and let you put it where you will always see it, so that it will help you to remember."

"Don't, Miss Davenant; it is only because I am with you—it would be different with strangers. You were so long in the entry,—did he

say anything more of his sister? I hope she won't expect too much, and won't mind my being young." The thin place in her armor troubled her. "I will have so much to do in getting ready. I am very glad I won't have to go far away, as I can see you sometimes, and then I can write to you often."

"Yes, dear; that will be a great comfort."

"But, Miss Davenant, you must promise never to mention my secret to any one, but wait patiently—won't you?"

"May be it would be better to have some one's opinion; I don't feel wholly satisfied."

"Promise me faithfully that you will not think of such a thing, as there is no one I would trust. I would only have to go away again and hide where you would never find me."

"Well, I promise you, Gertrude, to satisfy you, though I don't feel at all satisfied myself."

"You are my dear, good Miss Davenant." She raised her hand impulsively to her lips. "I shall feel happy now, as I have been so careful no one will ever discover me." And she shook her pretty head sagely.

"But now for the dresses,—I want that pink silk made first. I hope you won't think me very foolish." She played nervously with the table cover.

"Why do you want it, dear? I don't think it will ever be of any use to you."

"It is so pretty." Provoked that she could not give a more sensible reason, she added hurriedly, "I can wear anything and not be too warm, as it is so near the end of the season; and I have my black alpaca to commence with. I wonder what I will do with the beautiful lace

collars I brought with me? I have plenty of lace and jewelry, thanks to papa; but I really do not know when I can wear it all."

"I am afraid you won't have much occasion for it, Gertrude; but it will always be valuable. I think we can manage to get everything under way if not finished before Friday. The pink silk must be made out of the house by a French woman who could do justice to it. Dear child! I hope you may have a chance of displaying its beauties." Miss Davenant raised the blushing face and imprinted a warm kiss on the rosy, pouting lips.

"I am so sorry I bought it, Miss Davenant. But now that I have it, it may as well be made; don't you think so?"

"Certainly, dear. I am not laughing at you; as you have shown much good sense in so many things I cannot quarrel with you now. It might have been more serious if you could not have afforded it, but as it is we will let it pass, and trust, as I said before, you may have a chance of wearing it."

"What do you think I had better do about my other dresses? I would like to have everything ready if I could."

"Fortunately we have two whole days before Friday, so I think we can accomplish all. I know two women I can find to sew in the house, and if we have more than can be accomplished, Miss Green, who is not busy now, will help us."

CHAPTER VII.

"Come in!"

"Why, not up yet, John? You certainly take life easily."

"Is it late?"

"Only half-past eight."

"You don't say so! How I have slept. I was so tired out yesterday,—I suppose that was the reason. Where did you go, Ralph?" And Mr. Ward yawned and stretched his arms sleepily.

"To Wallack's. I came back for you, when I left Stern, but could not find you; so I went to Wallack's and had a very pleasant evening. They are running a new play which is excellent. I would like to see it again, as that pretty Mary Gannon plays in it. Suppose we make up a party and go there to-night. What say you? Stern said he would like to see it."

"So be it, Ralph. But hang these boots, I got them wet yesterday, and they stick like the devil."

"Speak for yourself, old fellow; I am free from his influence sometimes, if you are not. What's the row now?" in answer to another exclamation.

"I don't know how I will manage these boots, the leather is as stiff as iron. There! on at last." And he stamped his foot heavily down. "These new-fangled city boots don't suit country people."

"But where did you go last night, John?"

"I went on a duty visit for Margaret, to see that old Miss Smith she is always talking about. I went to get the pattern of tracts now the fashion, for Margaret's distribution."

"You don't mean to say you spent the evening with her?"

"No, I rather think not. Afterwards I went in answer to that advertisement I told you of."

"And did you succeed?"

"Very well; I saw a gushing young thing of sixteen."

"John, do be serious."

"Well, then, at last I have found a governess to break in my young colts."

"What is she like? I never saw any one more uncommunicative than you are."

"I'll tell you what, Ralph,"—and Mr. Ward turned from the glass laughing, with a brush in his hand—"if you are interesting yourself in this style in every young woman you hear of, I shall not go with you any more, as I am afraid the result will be serious. First it was your pretty cousin you were insane about, last night Mary Gannon, and now my governess. It is very bad style, I tell you, if nothing more serious results from it."

"Do be sensible, John; I think you have run me enough. I am only interested on your sister's and Rosa's account. You know I am waiting for your daughter."

"Well then, Ralph, if you must know, I am not fully satisfied with the young woman I have engaged. She is too young, little more than a child. I know what Margaret will think perfectly."

"Is she good looking?"

"How in the world was I to tell?"

"Haven't you eyes?"

"Yes, for horses."

"Ward, you are a brute; I won't have anything more to do with you."

"Well, I am satisfied—go ahead!"

"What in the d—l did you take the girl for if you don't know anything about her?"

"I know all that I cared to know."

"And pray what is that?"

"She is a lady."

"You don't say so!" Ralph drew down his face.

"You are the busiest fellow I ever knew, Ralph."

And Mr. Ward laughed. "I wanted a lady, and I have succeeded in finding one. I would have liked her to be older, to satisfy Margaret, but I cannot make her so; and after Miss Moore, it is just as well to try the other style. The most forcible reason of all is, I don't understand such things, and Margaret should attend to them herself, and not send me on such a fool's errand."

"You are such a lazy fellow, it is almost impossible to get anything out of you; but how did you ever find your way up to Twenty-seventh Street?"

"I wanted to see about a waiter who is engaged on Twenty-seventh Street. Miss Smith lives on Twenty-second Street, so you see it was quite convenient. Now you know all, I hope you are satisfied."

"Entirely. But when is this new addition to your family going home?"

"On Friday—with me."

"You are not going home this week? I hoped I had persuaded you out of it."

"Yes, Ralph, it is a busy season with us, and things will be all wrong as it is. I have turned off some of my old hands, and am not satisfied with the new."

"I wish you could carry that farm with you, John."

"I echo your wish, as I think things would be much more satisfactorily managed than they are when I leave. Did you make up your mind about those horses?"

"No, not yet. You are so slow dressing, I will have to leave you. Will you meet me at Delmonico's at five?"

"Yes; and if you have time, please find out the name of that harrow-maker for me,—there's a good fellow."

So the time passed rapidly for Mr. Ward; and it is Friday afternoon, ten minutes of two o'clock, as we again find him at the station.

"The train will leave in five minutes, and I will have to whistle for my governess. I do wish Margaret would attend to such things herself. Why can women never be punctual?" And he pulled out his watch.

"Just in time, Miss Lyle." As the bell rang, and Gertrude received a hurried kiss from Miss Davenant.

"Write soon, dear."

"Yes, I will. Good-by!" And the train was in motion. "I am sorry I was late, sir."

"Not at all, Miss Lyle! Do you prefer the window up or down?"

"I like it up best."

"Sensible girl," Mr. Ward thought. "Now if

it was Margaret, she would have wanted it down. Poor little thing, she is frightened!" He handed her the Atlantic Monthly.

"Thank you, sir!" Her large dark eyes were raised to his face.

"Not at all." Mr. Ward inclosed himself in his shell of indifference. Decidedly she was gushing, and he did not want another Miss Moore to fall in love with him. So he read his paper determinedly for half an hour, while Gertrude kept her eyes on her book, as she thought what a disagreeable man he was. May be he wanted to teach her her position as governess; and she straightened herself more stiffly as she read on, for Gertrude was proud.

"What in the world can she be reading so intently? It must be something interesting." And he looked over the side of his paper. "I suppose Ralph would be dying to know the color of her eyes. Where under heaven did she get such a hideous bonnet? It must be her grandmother's. Nice little thing—unobtrusive. Why, she has a nice hand, and, by Jove, a diamond ring! A governess with a diamond ring!" He lowered his paper entirely, quite interested, never noticing that Gertrude was watching him as intently, too, out of the corner of one eye that the large bonnet so well shielded.

"Are you too cold?"

"Thank you—no, sir." She resumed her book.

"Short and sweet. Nice little thing—not obtrusive." But Mr. Ward was too much spoiled at home to bear such utter neglect patiently. "There are several good articles here, Miss Lyle; one on the manners and customs of foreign nations, par-

ticularly their head-dresses." He could not help looking at her bonnet.

"Yes, thank you, sir!" Gertrude straightened herself more stiffly, as she thought he was amusing himself about her bonnet. Miss Davenant had told her it was too large for her, and much too old; but he was very impertinent, and she would show him she was not so young, and that he must not take liberties with her. So again the book and paper absorbed all their attention.

"Margaret won't like that ring. I wish I had seen it before, I would not have taken her. Where in the d—l did she get it? Such a child, too! She has got a will of her own. Bless you, John Ward, you are as bad as Ralph, interesting yourself so much in the governess." And again he tried to fix his mind on his paper; while Gertrude took her turn in scrutinizing his face.

"Cold, disagreeable man—I don't see how I could have thought him handsome. I don't think he looks like a gentleman."

"That is a very long page, Miss Lyle."

"What makes you think so, sir?"

"Saucy little thing, to think I was watching her! She will be a thousand times worse than Miss Moore. I wish I had not taken her."

"That view is beautiful, Miss Lyle."

"Lovely, lovely!" Locking her hands in each other, she forgot all but the beauty of the scene before her, as her eyes filled with tears.

"Gushing young creature! I suppose she will be quoting poetry to me,—Tennyson, may be." Again the paper was resumed; while Gertrude, turning to her companion for sympathy, met the thickly-lined columns of the paper.

"Boor!" Again the book went up with a

jerk. "It would be fearful living with such people, as the sister might be even worse, and the children——" Gertrude could go no further; her imagination pictured all too vividly. "Poor Miss Davenant and her hopes for the pink silk—what a blow they had received!"

"I am afraid you are cold, Miss Lyle."

"Not at all, Mr. Ward." The window was put down in disregard of her denial, Mr. Ward, in his hurry, tearing his hand with the sharp, rough catch.

"Hang it!" He covered his hand up quickly, so that she could not see it. The wound was, however, deeper than he thought, and bled profusely, at last attracting her attention.

"You have hurt yourself, sir; I am very sorry."

"It is nothing."

"Yes it is; let me tie it up for you. Your handkerchief is too large." A small, dainty piece of linen cambric, oddly in contrast with the rest of her dress, was in requisition, with which she proceeded to bind up the wounded hand, he looking on much interested, as the busy, nimble fingers did their task so neatly.

"You need not be afraid of hurting me—I am not a cobweb." As she handled him rather gingerly.

"No fear of any one's taking you for that, sir." Her task being finished, she was again deeply interested in her story.

"What under heaven did she mean by that? I wonder if she thinks I am a boor? Pleasant to be looked down on by one's governess. I see we will have no end of trouble; Miss Moore was a jewel in comparison. She is only a governess

after all, and what a fool I am to trouble myself so much!" He doubly underlined the words, inclosing them with brackets.

At last, however, their journey was accomplished, and the train stopped.

"Give me all your bags and bundles, Miss Lyle."

"Thank you, sir, I have not any."

Mr. Ward looked at her in astonishment. A woman who had no bundles, and did not mind a window; and the brackets round the word "governess" were not indented so deeply, for he could not help admiring her.

"The carriage is not here, and I am afraid you are tired."

"No, not at all." She laughed as Mr. Ward looked at her in new wonder. A young woman who was not tired after half a day's journey.

"How far is it, Mr. Ward?" Gertrude, who felt mollified when she looked at his wounded hand, raised her eyes to his face.

"Three miles."

"Is that all? I could walk it easily."

"Could you? Well, I couldn't, and wouldn't; so you will have to wait." Provoked, he hardly knew why, he commenced another impatient promenade of the platform. "There is Roger at last! Come, Miss Lyle. Roger, why are you so late?" And the vials of his wrath were emptied on the innocent man's head, and his favorite servant received such a scolding as he had not had for months, and was very thankful that none of his fellow-servants were within earshot, as it hurt his pride keenly. Gertrude, feeling meanwhile that she had received a rebuff, decided he was the greatest boor she had ever met.

She, however, soon entirely forgot her companion, in wonder at the new beauties every turn of the road presented. She did not intend to appeal to Mr. Ward again for sympathy, so they were both very quiet—she interested in all she saw, and he, in spite of his bad opinion of women generally, and governesses in particular, interested in her eager, enthusiastic face.

At length their destination was reached, and she was introduced to Miss Ward. "Too young,—what can John be thinking of?" was plainly written on that lady's face. The reception was very cold, for what good could such a child as that do? Rosa and Giovannino were then brought in to be introduced, and Gertrude, moved by their little frightened faces, stooped and kissed them; and both the children's hearts were taken by storm.

"You are to be good, and kind, and beautiful, like mamma, and not tell lies." She hesitated.

"What, dear?" As Rosa again repeated, Gertrude kissed the queer little child, in whom she was directly interested.

So we will leave Mr. Ward, more surprised and concerned in the new governess than he had been in anything for a long time.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE Wards are seated at breakfast, and though by the perfume of the fragrant mocha that is filling the air we learn the beverage is of the very best, it does not bring soothing thoughts and comfort to either of the partakers. The table appointments could not be improved; but still we see that luxury does not always have the perfect appreciation and enjoyment it should possess.

"I wish you would attend to all that concerns the children in future, Margaret, if Miss Lyle does not suit you." Mr. Ward tapped his knife on his plate in a way that was very disagreeable to any one of a sensitive or nervous temperament.

"Don't, John, please, dear, don't make that noise; it is very annoying."

"What is the matter now, Margaret? What has Miss Lyle been doing?"

"Nothing, brother." Miss Ward studied her coffee cup intently. "It is not what she does, but what she does not do. I said something to her about taking care of the children's deportment at meal-times; you would have thought I said something dreadful to her, as she said, though not of course in the same words, that she intended taking her meals with them, and that no lady could be with others who lacked those little niceties without noticing them."

"Well, Margaret, I thought you wanted her to stay up stairs?"

"So I did, dear. But she took it so as a matter of course, and never said anything about its being convenient, or anything of that kind; she is so very decided. Then the servants wait on her in a way that I cannot understand."

"That is it! You want to make her feel her uncomfortable position as governess."

"John, how unkind you are! I don't see how you can misjudge me so. I want the poor thing to be happy in her way, but there is a certain deference due to me as mistress of the house."

"In short, you want her to crawl in the dust at your feet, or sing your praises all day long. How foolish you women are, always open to flattery! I thought, Margaret, you had a more sensible reason for finding fault with Miss Lyle."

"You always so willfully misunderstand me, dear."

"Has she been rude to you, or said anything out of the way?"

"Oh, no!"

"Well, then, what the d—l do you want?" He was provoked out of all patience.

"John, John! To think that I should ever hear my brother use such words! Dear, dear me!" sighing. "But, brother, do you think it right in a governess to wear a diamond ring?"

"That is it! You want the diamond ring?"

"Brother!" Miss Ward had recourse to her handkerchief. "How unkind you are! I hope I am above all this world's wicked lures. I can't help liking consistency."

"The bonnet is ugly enough to suit any governess; and I don't think it a crime to wear

diamond rings. And although you are above this world's wicked lures, I see a diamond sparkling on your finger, only it is not as large or as fine as Miss Lyle's."

"Oh, oh, oh!" Miss Ward sobbed,—“that my brother should quarrel with me about a governess!” Miss Ward was evidently changing sadly, and we do not so much wonder her brother did not find her a cheerful companion.

James, the waiter, opened the door.

"Tell Charlotte I want my smelling-salts."

"Mr. Ward,"—the man hesitated, seeing clearly that all was not plain sailing,—“Farmer Jenkins has been here, waiting some time, and appears hurried, or I would not have disturbed you."

"You were right, James." And glad to be released, Mr. Ward left the room; while Miss Ward, feeling unhappy that she had vexed her brother, and as though she would like to make some one else uncomfortable, proceeded to the school-room.

"Miss Lyle, I picked this book up outside of the door; I am afraid the covers will hardly stand such rough usage as you let the children give them."

"Thank you, Miss Ward! Come in. We have finished lessons for the present." Gertrude smiled pleasantly, while Miss Ward doubtfully held the door in her hand, not liking being invited into a room in which she considered she had a perfect right, but at last ending her doubts by coming in.

"Vannino, here is the book we have been looking for so long this morning. We must keep it safe, now."

"Yes, me will."

"Come kiss Aunt Margaret, like a good little boy, for finding it for us."

"Johnnie loves his aunt well enough to kiss her without being told." Holding her face to the child.

"No, me don't. Me no John." The old dispute was commenced again.

"Kiss Aunt Margaret—there's a good boy, Vannino," as the child promptly obeyed. The kiss was submitted to coldly by his aunt, who did not like the forced caress.

"I think, Miss Lyle, you should teach that boy to know his name, and not that heathenish trash. The boy's name is John, and not Giovannino." Gertrude, dreading a scene such as she had witnessed the first few days, and was only now beginning to conquer, gave him her objectionable ring to play with.

"Don't do that, Miss Lyle—he will lose it." His aunt held out her hand for the ring.

"No, no!" The child drew his hand back with his treasure.

"I think we can trust Vannino. You will be careful, won't you, dear?"

"Yes, me careful." And the little fellow, delighted with his brilliant plaything, held it in the sunlight to see the many beautiful rainbow colors.

"I think in such a little thing as his name we had better let the children alone. It only serves as a reminder, and makes him remember better. He will forget all about it as he grows older, and then you can change his name if you choose, and he will not care."

"I am sorry I do not agree with you, Miss

Lyle; my brother's name is very dear to me." Miss Ward straightened herself very stiffly.

"I dare say, Miss Ward; but we cannot expect children to reason—they are guided by impulse. What a lovely morning it is, and how magnificent those old trees are!" She turned to the window. "Won't you come with us for our walk?"

If there was anything Miss Ward gloried in after her brother, it was their home; so she was quite mollified by its praise.

"I think it is one of the loveliest places I have ever seen. Come, Vannino, my ring! The sun is going behind a cloud, and we should go. Won't you come with us, Miss Ward?" pleadingly.

"No, my dear, not this morning," Miss Ward forgot herself so far as to say. "I have a slight cold, and had better stay in. James, I think, might go with you and take care of the children, and show you all that is worth seeing. He has lived on the place all his life, and knows it quite as well as I do."

"That would be delightful! You are very kind, Miss Ward." And Gertrude, forgetting the governess, raised Miss Ward's soft white hand to her lips, as she had a great respect for age; and though Miss Ward was only forty-five (ten years older than her brother), she appeared at least sixty, as his trouble had weighed heavily on her.

"I am afraid I was cross a little while ago," she unbent enough to say. "I am not feeling very well this morning, and old people are often troublesome."

"Come and see us often, if we brighten you up. I would love to have you."

"Thank you, dear!" Miss Ward was certainly

making a mistake, and forgetting the governess, won by her lovely face and loving words, and Miss Lyle was forgetting her part too. How much pleasanter it would be for both if they could only always forget themselves.

"My dear,"—Miss Ward hesitated, interested in Gertrude, and wishing to be set at ease,—"*don't you think that ring is rather conspicuous?*"

"I never thought. I have worn it all my life. It belonged to my mother. Papa gave it to me, and told me always to wear it, and I always will. My mother is not living." Her eyes filled with tears.

"I won't trouble you again about it; you know best, dear." It was a great concession, but "the governess" was fast going up the chimney in smoke, for the present at least.

Gertrude had been in her new home a month, and, fully occupied and much interested in her little charges, did not find that the time weighed heavily. A great change was seen in the children, who were devotedly attached to her, and always happy when with her. All her care had been paid back with a double measure of love, and their new friend's name was always on their lips. The summer was over, and they could no longer take their long rambles; so it was very fortunate that they had Gertrude's love to shield them in the house, or they would have had a hard time of it. Marietta's counteracting influence was strong, but they were no longer entirely swayed by her. Gertrude understood the trouble, and was hoping to get rid of the woman. She did not like to speak to their aunt, as she was never well, and little things troubled her; but she hoped for some chance meeting and opportunity of speaking to their father.

Miss Ward could not always resist Gertrude's bright, sunny face, and was often, as we have seen her this morning, in the school-room. She was a proud woman, and very much afraid of her dignity; so when she was irritable or not feeling well, she vented her irritation on Gertrude, who bore it very patiently. Mr. Ward Gertrude seldom saw, as he was always engaged on his farm, and rarely in the house. The only time she might have met him was in the middle of the day, when she took the children for their walk; but as that was always the most fully occupied part of his day, they seldom met. He noticed the difference in his children, and often thought of their journey from New York, when the girl's independence had attracted him; but he was a proud man, like his sister, and could not take thought of the governess. Her indifference and independence were a new phase of life to him, and if she had been any one but the governess, it would have given him something for thought; but as it was, he hardened his heart, and tried to think of her as of a mere machine.

He had a little soiled handkerchief, he still kept, as he said, to serve as a good lesson to keep Miss Lyle at a distance in future. At first he decided to keep it in remembrance of her kind, interested face; then he thought how foolishly he was acting; Miss Lyle was only the governess after all, and the best of women were not worth a thought. Then he looked at it, deciding, as it was dirty, it had better be washed; and, congratulating himself on being sensible, threw it on the floor just where the housemaid would get it. Then, on going down stairs, he had to go all the way back to pick it up. No one

knew how much trouble that little piece of linen cambric gave him. If he had left it for the housemaid to take, his sister would know all about it; as servants were so curious, and so fond of gossip, the girl would know it was a lady's handkerchief directly. May be she would decipher the initials, G. H. L., and find that it belonged to Miss Lyle. What was more likely? He did not want to get Miss Lyle into trouble, and somehow he did not know why he did not care to tell his sister how it came into his possession. Margaret asked so many foolish questions, and there was no way of evading her. He would burn it—that was the best way; and he walked toward the grate. It was such a dainty little bit of a thing, it appeared a pity; may be Miss Lyle would miss it and want it—of course she would—and would think him more of a boor than ever. So, never thinking but what it was as useless as if he had never had it, he locked it up safely in his drawer, waiting for her to ask for it. He did wish she would, as *he* did not want it; but he could not say anything to her about it now, as he did not want her to think he had kept it and thought of it so long: dear knows what else she might not think. If he had only given it to her at first; but he had not, and there it was to teach him a lesson—so he said. A lesson on what? It was doubtful; but it was equally as doubtful if Miss Lyle would ask for it. So Mr. Ward, feeling very much like the man who had won an elephant in a raffle, condemned the poor little blood-stained handkerchief to solitary confinement, for no fault of its own, and for what result remained doubtful.

Meanwhile Gertrude, comfortable and happy,

followed everywhere by the children, who were only happy when with her, wrote long, cheerful letters to Miss Davenant, who fully entered into all her troubles and pleasures. Gertrude loved the country as much as the children, and took an interest in all that interested them. She was never tired of talking to them, and knew so many beautiful stories to tell them, that they were never weary of hearing her. She had been educated in Paris, and knew so many strange things to delight her eager listeners, that it was always a source of renewed pleasure.

"She was very kind and good, and never told lies," so Rosa soon found out; "and more beautiful than mamma," the child had added, doubtfully. Vannino had echoed her, and as her heart became more loyal to her new friend, she said decidedly: "Much more beautiful than mamma," and had persisted in it in disregard of Marietta's stormy threats, and even blows. Gertrude waited impatiently for a chance of speaking to Mr. Ward on the subject of Marietta's ill treatment, but had not yet succeeded in finding an opportunity.

Miss Ward, leaving Miss Lyle and the children to take their walk, waited impatiently for her brother, as she never could be satisfied when she thought he was provoked with her. She found occasion to tell him that Miss Lyle had a reason for wearing her ring, and they had better let it pass, entirely forgetting it was herself, and not her brother, who had noticed it.

"She is a very nice young person for a governess, though very decided, John, dear. She *will* call John Vannino, because she says he will forget that other heathenish name sooner if we let him alone. I wish you would speak to her; she is

much too decided for a governess, and it is such disrespect of your name."

"Miss Lyle is a sensible girl, Margaret, and I think you had better let her manage as she pleases with the children." Mr. Ward had some more troublesome thoughts about the decided young person who had so softened his sister.

CHAPTER IX.

BREAKFAST was over in the school-room, and the breakfast things had been taken away to make ready for the work of the day.

Gertrude had been asked many times by Miss Ward to come down stairs and join her brother and herself, but she always had some excuse ready, and did not even dine with them, but preferred dining early with the children. The girl was too proud to accept anything that was not her right, and to put herself in a false position; as she would be very apt to meet the friends of the Wards if she made a practice of dining down stairs, and it would not be pleasant to either Miss Ward or herself. She pleaded the children's comfort when invited, and certainly Rosa and Vannino, as the little fellow persisted in calling himself, would have missed her sadly.

Gertrude is very lovely as she sits in her low chair, bending over her eager little pupils, and smoothing their path of knowledge for them. Two little loving hearts, that had never known any true, consistent love, are learning their lesson fast. Her hand is clasped tightly in Vannino's, as the little fellow masters his a-b abs, and Rosa's large black eyes are raised from time to time to her face, and we see how perfectly both the children and herself understand each other, and how very strong already is the cord that

binds their hearts together. So young, almost a child herself, she can better enter into their grievances than an older person could, and as the busy hum is heard, we pause, interested enough to listen.

"A-b spells what, Vannino?"

"Ab."

"And b-a?"

"Ba." The boy patted the hand he held in his. "It is snowing, Miss Lyle. Can't we go and play?"

"What does c-o-w spell, Vannino?" Not heeding the interruption, Gertrude put her hand below the word.

"We were to go out the first snow—Marietta said so." Rosa laid down her book, interested in the fastly falling snow-flakes.

"You are two naughty children, and can't go at all till you know your lessons." Then, seeing Rosa's face cloud, as the children were not yet in perfect subjection, she added: "I will tell you what I will do if you are both good children, and know your lessons in one more half hour. I will go with you and make snow-balls."

"Will you really?" Both Rosa's arms were round her neck; while Vannino, less demonstrative, was looking at her with wide-opened eyes, and studying the mystery of Miss Lyle making snow-balls.

"With your hands?" Vannino looked at the small soft hand he held in his own. "With your own hands, really and truly?" Poor little Vannino had been deceived so often by Marietta that he could not believe in the pleasure in store for him.

"Yes, really and truly. Why not?" as she

kissed the serious child's face. She did not understand why Vannino interested her much the more of the two children, though Rosa was brighter, and gave less trouble.

"Why not, Vannino? I always mean what I say."

"Oh, you're too big! and Marietta never does."

"Does what?"

"She lies!" Rosa promptly chimed in.

"Rosa, Rosa! don't say that. It is not pretty."

"She *does*!" Vannino stoutly asserted, as he looked at his sister for confirmation of what he had said.

"I mean what I say, Giovannino. Won't you trust me?"

"Yes!" The boy still looked at her doubtfully.

"Poor little Vannino!" She held him closely to her.

"I am not poor!" said the little fellow earnestly, taking the words in their literal sense. "Me is Vannino Ward, and though I don't love papa, he will make me rich."

Poor little Vannino! who was so old for his six years. Deceit and neglect had made both the children old beyond their years. Gertrude drew them more closely to her as she read the truth, and seeing how Rosa resented correction from her aunt, wisely let the undutiful speech pass, knowing some older head than the child's had suggested it. Love could not be forced; therefore it was better not to notice, though it pained her when she thought of her own father, and drew her more closely to the little neglected ones.

"Come, Rosa. Now, Vannino, sit down and

see what we can do in half an hour." As again the books were resumed.

"What does c-o-w spell, Vannino?"

"I know what d-o-g spells." And he raised his face roguishly.

"What does it spell?" And Gertrude smiled too.

"It spells Floss, of course." And the child laughed as Rosa and Gertrude joined him.

"Not Floss! Oh, Vannino! Dog!" Rosa laughed again.

"This will not do, Rosa. Do be attentive."

For ten minutes the children were again deep in study, and Vannino was almost through with his lesson as Rosa again raised her head.

"Miss Lyle, how much do you think it would take to keep a dog alive?" The child's face was very serious.

"Not very much, Rosa. Why do you ask?"

"Oh, no matter!" And again her head was bent over her book.

"I know!" Vannino, glad of an excuse for inattention, looked interested.

"Don't, Vannino, or I'll never forgive you." Rosa raised her finger warningly.

"What is it, Rosa—won't you tell me?"

"No, you'd tell." And the child again looked steadily at her book.

"Do tell, Rosa! do tell!" Vannino was beside his sister.

"I locked Floss up." And the black eyes were raised defiantly.

"Your father's dog? What will he think?" Miss Lyle, who admired the handsome setter, and knew his master had scolded Rosa before for bringing him in the house, was troubled.

"Go and let the dog out, Rosa. Your father will not like it."

"I don't care! And I can't."

"Rosa, Rosa! after being such a good girl all morning." Gertrude laid her hand on the child's head.

"I try to be good with you, Miss Lyle, but I can't let Floss out." And her eyes filled with tears.

"Why not, Rosa?"

"I saw him beaten." The words were spoken very low, while she shuddered, and raised her hand to her head as if to ward off a blow.

"It hurts, Miss Lyle." She laid her head on Gertrude's shoulder, who could feel how her slight form trembled.

"What makes you say that, Rosa?" Her eyes were full of tears of sympathy, as she raised the child's head.

"Vannino knows!" She looked at her brother, who shook his head in dissent. "I used to be beaten, and it hurt so." And again the frightened look came into her face.

"Rosa, think what you are saying, dear. Who would do such a thing?"

"Mamma and Marietta. But I love mamma." Her black eyes were full of defiance.

Gertrude sighed as she thought what a heavy task lay before her. If Rosa's memory were not so good, how much easier it would have been.

"I think we had better take our play now, and finish the lessons this afternoon." Gertrude, seeing the troublesome thoughts were again revived, wanted to distract her attention.

"Do, do!" The children clapped their hands with delight as they ran to the window to see the snow.

"The ground is covered thick—do look, Miss Lyle!" Rosa's eager face was turned to Gertrude, who was busy putting the room in better order.

"Do come, Miss Lyle!" Vannino pulled her to the window.

"What will we wear, Miss Lyle?" Rosa, whose hand was on the door, paused.

"Something very warm, and your thickest boots, Rosa."

"Miss Lyle," and the child's face, clouded and full of tears, was put in the door, while a dark red mark glowed on her cheek, "Marietta said we should not go; and she struck me, and I told her she was a beast." And Rosa stamped her foot.

"I am very sorry, Rosa; that was very naughty, and I don't wonder that Marietta was angry. Go and ask her please. But wait, I will go myself." And seeing how much the child's temper had been tried, Gertrude started on her errand.

"Marietta, how dared you strike Rosa? If ever I hear of your doing such a thing again, I will tell Mr. Ward." Gertrude took the children's coats in her hand that the woman was sullenly getting in obedience to her orders. "You need not come—I shall dress them myself; but another time, when either of the children brings you a message from me, see you attend to it." And Gertrude, wondering at her own courage, as there was no one she dreaded more than the swarthy Italian, hastened back to the school-room.

"You are going to dress us—oh, how nice!" Vannino laughed as Gertrude came in laden with their things.

"You must put on your boots yourself, Vannino, while I go and get my things." The little fellow proceeded laughingly to do as he was told, assisted by Rosa, who was again all smiles. They were both too young to have anything make a very serious impression, and they had had so little affection that the lesson of love was easily learned. At last, however, they were all cloaked and ready, and Rosa stopped doubtfully, holding the door in her hand. "Miss Lyle," and she raised her face hesitatingly, "could I have Floss?"

"Rosa, has poor Floss been locked up all this time?"

"You won't tell, Miss Lyle?"

"No, Rosa. But you must never do it again."

"And I may have him?"

"Yes." And the little eager figure ran on before them, but soon returned, followed by the dog, who was delighted at being released. It was a lovely winter landscape, the branches of the trees covered with snow, and everything dressed in its pure white garb. It was a grand frolic, the three running races, and Rosa and Vannino pelting Gertrude with the snow, which she as promptly returned. Floss, too, was barking loudly, by way of showing his approval of the sport, and made the bright scene more noisy. Aunt Margaret stopped to watch, and shook her head as she wondered if that was the way the lessons were to be learned,—decidedly the new governess was too much of a child, and she washed her hands of the whole matter. But although she disapproved, she still watched the merry group, and enjoyed the beauty of the picture quite as much as another person who had just closed the gate.

The hood had fallen off Gertrude's head in her romp, and the hair, usually smoothed down so tightly, loosened from the comb, was blowing all over her glowing face in a mass of sunny brown ripples, as she laughingly returned a well-aimed snow-ball from Vannino.

"Oh, children, I am so tired, I don't think I can play any more!"

"There is papa!" Instantly the whole group changed, as Gertrude blushing smoothed back her rumpled locks, and was my lady governess again.

"Giovannino, Rosa, come—we must go." She held out her hands to the children.

"No, no! Not just yet, Miss Lyle." Rosa put her glowing cheek on her friend's hand, while Vannino already had the other hand, and was shrinking close to her, quite ready to go, now that his father had come.

"Who unchained that dog?" Mr. Ward, provoked that his presence should be so received, frowned as Floss bounded toward him. "Roger," and he turned to one of the men who was passing, "fasten that dog up directly, and see to it he does not get loose again."

"No, no, he shan't!" Rosa indignantly ran forward and threw both arms round the dog's neck. "He shan't, papa! I tell you he shan't!" And the child struck the man's hand as he was trying to lead the dog away.

"Rosa, dear, let Floss go." Gertrude took her hand.

"No, no, Miss Lyle!" And in a suppressed voice: "I told you I saw him beaten, and I shan't."

"You may leave the dog, Roger." A dark frown passed over Mr. Ward's face.

"Thank you, papa, thank you!" Rosa impulsively seized his hand and covered it with kisses, as her tears rained down on it. It was the first time since she was a very little child that she had received or taken a caress from her father, and the man was strangely moved as he put his other hand on her bowed head.

"I saw him beaten, papa." Again the dark look was called up in the man's face. Father and daughter had met on level ground.

"Will you let me have Floss all to my own self?—and may he be fed and be with me always, my own, own dog?" The eager words were poured breathlessly forth.

"Yes, Rosa, yes!" Her father raised her face and kissed her, and then, ashamed of his emotion, turned away.

Aunt Margaret watched the scene from the window above with eyes filled with tears, as she thought Rosa was learning lessons most worthy of knowing, and which she had tried in vain to teach her.

From that day Floss was a privileged character, allowed to go where he pleased, and Miss Ward's respect for the new governess was much more firmly grounded; while Mr. Ward, walking to the house, wondered if Miss Lyle noticed his weakness, and then was angry at himself for wondering. What mattered it to him what the governess thought? The proud man bit his lip, as he pushed the door open with unusual violence. The new governess was decidedly more troublesome than the last.

CHAPTER X.

"I WANT to speak to your father, Rosa. Will you take Vannino in for me?" Gertrude, knowing that Mr. Ward was alone in his study, and this was the chance she coveted, led the children to the side door.

"Not yet, please!" the little ones pleaded.

"Yes! Be good children, and I will tell you a long story."

"As long as Red Riding Hood?"

"Yes, quite as long, dear."

"And I may have Floss?"

"If you are very good, and do not make any noise, for then I can't tell you the story."

"We will be very good, Miss Lyle," Rosa said, in delight at being trusted. "Floss will go to sleep, and we will be very quiet, won't we, Vannino?"

"Yes, I am good." The hard words of the new lesson were bravely spoken, to please Gertrude.

"That is my good boy. He will be a man soon, and able to take care of sister Rosa."

"And you too."

"Good-by, Vannino! Be good children." Patting his rumpled head encouragingly. "Ann,"—she stopped a smiling housemaid, to whose honest, good-natured face she had taken a fancy,—"will you take the children to the school-room for me, please, and take their things off? I would rather they did not go to the nursery."

"Yes, ma'am." The girl grinned broadly; Gertrude left the children telling her the wonderful news that Floss was to be Rosa's dog, and would have just as much as he could eat, and be with them always—so papa said, which was the clincher to the argument.

"Can I come in, Mr. Ward?"

"Certainly, Miss Lyle." Trying to be at his ease, Mr. Ward proceeded to disembarrass one of the chairs of its load. "Don't close that door, it is so warm." He said it for something to say.

"I think it is quite cold, and I found it closed."

"Did you?"

"Yes, I did. You certainly heard me knock, as you told me to come in." She was provoked.

"Yes, of course! I am very busy, as you see, and did not hear what you said."

"Boor!" was plainly written on her face.

"I did not mean that. Excuse me! I am not a ladies' man. (What in heaven's name can the young woman want?) Don't you think it very cold to-day?"

"Why, I thought you said it was warm!"

"Did I? Well, I think it is cold." He frowned as though his boots pinched him, while he cleared his throat. "Yes, cold decidedly. We don't often have snow in October." Clearing his throat again.

"Don't you? Oh!"

"Oh! (What the deuce did she come here for? I think I gave her a pretty strong hint; Margaret never does. But this young woman has enough brass condensed in her troublesome self to fit out an iron foundery.)" We see Mr. Ward's thoughts were growing confused.

("I wonder if he thinks I have come in for a visit. The man is worse than a boor—a fool. If we go on in this way, I will never get what I have got to say said. The children will be in no end of mischief. If he were not such a clown, he would help me. There is something running in me every now and then. I wonder if he has studded his chairs with pins on purpose.) Goodness!" She gave a little jump, as she put her hand down on her dress, and something scratched it.

"Oh, what a pity! You have broken one of my finest fish-hooks."

"Fish-hooks!" She held up her poor little wounded hand in horror.

"You have hurt your hand very much, Miss Lyle. I am sorry! The next time you come to see me, I will have all such troublesome things out of the way."

("Come to see him! The impudence of this man passes all belief!) I came on business, sir!" in her coldest voice.

("What in the world *did* she come for?) I am all attention, Miss Lyle!" ironically. But seeing the blood on her handkerchief, he said more pleasantly: "I am so sorry, Miss Lyle! It reminds me of the day when you——" He paused. ("What, in the name of all that is pious, did I say that for? The girl is a witch, and more to be dreaded than the plague. She'll think I am in love with her now, sure enough.") He bit his lip savagely; while Gertrude was too much troubled about the best way of introducing her subject to notice his discomfiture.

"Mr. Ward!"

"Miss Lyle, do you feel a draught? Margaret

always does when she comes in here—she never can stay a minute. You see the windows are open."

"I should say by their looks they were closed." Gertrude smiled.

("Can't take a hint even! Playing the governess with me.) Open round the sashes, I mean. Not firmly set—close."

"Thank you, Mr. Ward, for your explanation. I am very stupid, I know."

("There she goes again!")

"Mr. Ward, I came in on business."

"Did you? Oh!"

"Mr. Ward, I am worried about the children."

"I am sorry, Miss Lyle; but you know I prepared you. I told you they were little imps."

"They are remarkably good, affectionate children."

"Indeed!" He opened his eyes very wide. ("Pleasant young woman, she takes pleasure in contradicting.")

"It is not the children, but Marietta."

"Excuse me, Miss Lyle, I understood you to mean the children."

"Yes, sir! But you interrupted me so quickly, I could not explain. (What a boor that man is; I have hardly patience to continue!)"

("Thinks me rude! Well, I'll be shot if I ever engage a governess again. Miss Moore was a jewel in comparison with this one.")

"The children are old enough to do without a nurse. Marietta's influence is not good. Will you discharge her?"

("Coming to the point quick enough this time. The girl's got good sense, sure enough.) I quite

agree with you, Miss Lyle! But how could you manage without her? (No danger but what she could; she is equal to anything.)

"If you will kindly let me have Ann to fill Marietta's place, it will be all that is necessary. I can superintend their clothes, and do all she could not do."

"I am afraid you are taking too much on yourself, Miss Lyle. (I never saw any person with more peculiar tastes. Wants to turn herself into a nurse. I do hope this new plan will work, and Rosa and Giovannino will torment her well.)"

"I would rather have it as I have said. It would really give me less trouble."

"Miss Lyle, you can judge best! But I am afraid they will give you no end of trouble; they have very unruly tempers."

"You misjudge your children sadly, Mr. Ward! They have sweet tempers, but have only been mismanaged."

("There she goes again! If Rosa has a sweet temper, that is something new. I wonder if I know my right hand from my left?) Send her down stairs when you go up, Miss Lyle, and I will settle with her."

"Oh, sir! Give the poor woman some time."

("I wonder if she wants to teach me my letters?) Do I understand you, Miss Lyle, that you think Marietta should go?"

"Certainly, sir!"

"Well, then, she goes to-night."

"But——"

"I never keep a bad servant in the house a moment when I know it. Marietta has proved an exception on the children's account; but she shall fare the same as the rest."

"But the poor woman may not be prepared, sir. She may not have means, and——"

"Miss Lyle, I am not quite such a boor as I appear." Reading her thoughts to her consternation. "I am a just master, though you may not think it. Marietta will receive a month's wages in advance, though she goes to-night."

"Oh, sir! I did not mean——Thank you very much for the children's sake." Gertrude was melted by his kindness.

"Not at all, Miss Lyle! You are striving to do your duty, as I try to do mine; we neither of us deserve thanks from one another; it is not necessary."

"Good morning, Mr. Ward!"

"Good morning, Miss Lyle!"

"Proud, cold, disagreeable man; there is something noble in him though he is such a boor." Such were Gertrude's thoughts.

"I think I repressed the poetry that time; the girl is bright, and good, and certainly a lady." Such were Mr. Ward's conclusions.

"Good morning, John!" Ralph Livingston came into the room.

"Who was that lovely girl I met in the hall?"

"What lovely girl? Do you mean Miss Lyle, my governess?"

"Your governess!" He gave a shrill whistle. "It could not be."

"Miss Lyle just left this room."

"You don't say so! She has the most lovely face I have ever seen."

"Now don't go off in an ecstasy, Ralph." And vexed, he hardly knew why, he tried to change the subject.

"But where did you get her?"

"On Twenty-seventh Street, I told you. Do let Miss Lyle alone; she is well enough."

"I should rather say she was. How are the children, and Miss Ward?" Seeing his friend was vexed.

"Quite as well as usual, thank you. Margaret is always ailing, more or less."

"How do they bear the new system of teaching?"

"Very well. But, Ralph, you never sent me that harrow."

"I couldn't, John! The man had his patent taken from him for some reason, I don't know what, and he is not making any more at present. But I must go. I just came in for a moment as I passed. I rode Black Bess so fast that she was all in a lather."

"Don't hurry, Ralph; Roger will see to Bess."

"Yes! But I had better go. I will come in again this evening." And though he did not say it, Ralph was bent on knowing the governess.

"Now, I will have a time with Ralph about that girl. I would give anything if she had never come. She is a bright little thing (if only she don't get spoiled), and manages the children admirably. I am sorry I was so rough with her; maybe I frightened her. That was a good move about Marietta. Why, the little thing is as full of spirit as she can be; but I don't want Ralph to fall in love with her. It would be dreadful if he were to take a fancy to her; it would be just like him, he is so impulsive. A Livingston marry a governess! Horrors! But she is a lady. What the d—l am I dreaming of? I wish that girl were in the Red Sea." He took down a book, and commenced to read. "That man

writes like a prig." He yawned wearily. "I am afraid I rode too far this morning; I hope I did not hurt Beelzebub. Ralph said she had a lovely face. What possessed him to say that? I wish he hadn't said it. Ralph is a fool about women. She does look prettily though. She shall stay up-stairs where he cannot worry her, poor little thing; she shall not be worried. Well, I never knew any one so tired as I am this morning. Ugh!" He yawned again. "I wish I hadn't made a fool of myself about her finger; I do wonder what she thought? I hope she don't think I have got that handkerchief. Hang her! Why can't she ask for it? I don't know what is the matter with me this morning; I never remember being so tired. It is fortunate I am not, like Ralph, ready to run after every pretty face; he would get himself into no end of scrapes if he had not me to watch him. Wish he had let Miss Lyle alone. Governesses have a hard time, poor things!" The brackets round the word were deeply indented. "Ralph shan't worry her, though she is only a governess. Ralph is a fool! A decided fool! If I had not known him all my life I would give him up. He is such a confounded fool!"

CHAPTER XI.

"I ASKED Miss Lyle to come down stairs this evening after the children were in bed; she looked so lonely in the school-room last evening. I thought a change would be more agreeable for her."

"I am sorry, Margaret." Mr. Ward's face clouded. "It appears as though every one in this house were in league to contradict me. Ralph is coming here this evening."

"Dear Ralph! Is he at home again? I will be so glad to see him."

"Yes; but don't you understand it is unfortunate? I did not want Ralph to meet Miss Lyle."

"Why not, John?"

"Margaret, please don't begin and ask a million questions."

"The parlor is so large, I don't see how we can trouble you; Miss Lyle is going to show me a new crochet stitch, and she is such a perfect lady, I don't see how she would trouble you."

"I don't doubt it; but Ralph is such a fool, he will be sure to fall in love with her."

"Fall in love with a governess!" Miss Ward held up her hands. "My poor brother, how little you understand the usages of society." And she sighed. "There is no danger of any-

thing of the kind; you know the Livingston pride. I would not even breathe such a thought."

"I suppose you mean I have not common sense; it was a pity I was not more thoroughly educated to suit your fastidious tastes." Mr. Ward, who was in a thoroughly bad humor, vented it on his sister as the most convenient object.

"Brother! brother! Why will you always be so violent? You must know I mean nothing unkind. But I can speak to Miss Lyle."

"There you go again, Margaret. Don't you know if you tell her not to come, now that you have asked her, she will suspect something; and you women are so very inquisitive, she will soon find out that Ralph is here, and have her own thoughts."

"Miss Lyle is too modest a girl for anything of the kind; you sadly wrong her." Naturally kind-hearted, Miss Ward took up the cudgels in the absent one's favor.

"Well, I don't suppose I know anything, and had better go to school."

"Miss Lyle is a sensible girl, and acted very wisely about Marietta; but she does everything too quickly with the impatience of youth; Marietta might as well have stayed a few days longer."

"She might *not*, and it was I who ordered her to go instantly; when a servant is discharged the sooner she goes the better, for she would have only exercised a bad influence on the rest."

"I know, brother, but then one pities the poor thing; and I am afraid it will exercise a bad influence on the other servants, and make them dislike her."

"Miss Lyle has not been hasty, Margaret; she has shown decision of character, and much more good sense than you were ever guilty of. Why could not you, long ago, do as she has done, get rid of Marietta, when you knew she ought to go?"

"Don't be unkind, brother; you know I am not strong, or used to children." A tear trickled down her cheek, as she could not bear reproof from him.

"Forgive me, Margaret, I know I was cross. I am tired; and that Italian and I had a stormy scene." He gave her a warm kiss of reconciliation that more than healed the breach.

* * * * *

"One, two, three—put the thread over the needle so, and it will be all right." Mr. Ward looked up from his paper, and watched the bright, intelligent girl who was bearing his sister's stupidity so patiently. "One, two, three, Miss Ward,—that's it; only hold the thread more loosely, or it will be drawn too tight, and cannot lie smoothly."

"Thank you, dear! I think I understand. Who taught you all these pretty stitches you do so easily?"

"I learned them at school; you know I told you I was educated in Paris."

"Yes, dear, I remember your telling me. Good evening, Ralph. Dear boy, I am so glad to see you! How is your mother?"

"Miss Lyle, Mr. Livingston." Ralph bowed.

"Mother is very well, thank you, and is coming to see you soon. You look better than when I last saw you, Miss Ward. Well, John, any news this evening?"

"Nothing at all, Ralph. Have you heard any more of your lovely cousin?"

"Not a word." Ralph looked confused. "Mr. Ward takes the privilege of an old friend, and is fond of quizzing me."

Gertrude had heard Mr. Livingston frequently spoken of by Miss Ward, and was prepared to see him, as she knew he was coming that evening, Miss Ward having told her. Mr. Ward, who was watching her, saw the glad look in her eyes as the young man came in. She half extended her hand, and then blushed a vivid crimson. He set her down as a flirt, like all other women, and felt disappointed, he hardly knew why. Judging from appearances, she was in love already, may be with his name—just like any silly school-girl. He looked at her no longer, deciding she was not worth the trouble.

Ralph, meanwhile, saw the blush and eager face, and decided that it was his new coat that was so becoming; and with the vanity that is always to be found in a man who has any pretension to good looks, stood before the glass in his room, when he went home, for a full half hour, contemplating his back, nose, and eyes in turn, as he decided Miss Lyle was a lovely girl, and a sensible one too, and that he would always have his coats made the same way. So he made an excuse to go to New York very soon after, and ordered three coats of the same style, only differing in color. Mr. Ward looked at the coat, and wished Ralph had a little sense and would not run after every woman he saw. What, in the name of all that was wonderful, did he wear that coat for—coming to pass the evening in full dress, as if he were going to a party? He was sorry he had dressed himself as he had, and he wished

he were not as good-looking; for he pitied Miss Lyle, though she was so silly, and he was not going to have Ralph trouble her. Meanwhile, Gertrude, interested in Mr. Livingston because he was very much like a portrait she had in her possession, thought he was very handsome and well-bred, so different from Mr. Ward, and she knew she would like him very much. We see Gertrude was forgetting the governess, and the pink silk was decidedly going up in the scales.

"How do you like New York, Miss Lyle?"

Mr. Ward frowned at Ralph and tried to attract his attention. He was forgetting Miss Lyle's position as governess, and she should not be trifled with.

"Very much, thank you, Mr. Livingston." She dwelt on the name as though she liked it.

Mr. Ward interrupted with some question about horses, which Ralph answered impatiently, thinking his friend was very tiresome. So when again he turned to Gertrude, Mr. Ward interrupted with another question, which this time she answered herself, showing she understood what they were talking about. Seeing Gertrude could join in, Ralph talked about horses for full five minutes, to satisfy his host, though Mr. Ward did not look as much pleased as he should have done under the circumstances.

"You like horses, Miss Ward?"

"Indeed I do, Mr. Livingston! But I don't like to talk horse—particularly here."

"Why not?" Mr. Ward was interested enough to say.

"I think it is not ladylike, or a fit subject for a lady's parlor. Do you?" She raised her eyes to Ralph's face. "There are so very many subjects

to choose from, we can always select the most suitable."

"I agree with you perfectly, Miss Lyle."

"How pleasant to find a kindred spirit!" Mr. Ward grumbled. "I suppose you like poetry, Miss Lyle?"

"To be sure I do, Mr. Ward. I would be sadly wanting in taste if I did not."

("I suppose that is intended as a settler for me. That little witch has the sharpest tongue I ever met with.")

"What are you making, Miss Lyle—a sofa cushion?" Ralph examined her work curiously. "Who for, may I ask?"

"A good person—may be for you!" she said laughingly.

"Now that passes everything!" Mr. Ward drew away in disgust. "She is certainly the most audacious young woman I have ever met. To talk to a man in that style whom she has only known an hour! I had better be careful myself—heaven knows what she will say to me." There appeared, however, to be no danger of her saying anything, so much was she engrossed with Ralph.

Miss Ward was too much engaged with her new stitch to notice what was going on round her. Her brother's face grew darker as he looked at her and thought what an idiot she was to be so much interested in a little ball of string and a bone with a hook at one end.

"One, two, three," counted Miss Ward in the most aggravating manner. It would have given him the greatest pleasure to throw a book at her head. But still the "one, two, three" went on, and poor Miss Ward, unconscious of the storm

that raged in her brother's breast, occasionally asked a question of Gertrude, and then went on contentedly with her task.

Where was Margaret's pride? Her brother put the brackets in so tightly round the word governess that it quite hurt him. How ridiculously Ralph looked, turning himself into a reel for the governess's pleasure, who was busily engaged winding her worsted off of his hands! Ralph was making a fool of himself waiting on the governess. The words were almost hissed through his teeth as he picked up her scissors.

"Thank you, Mr. Ward." The low words brought him to himself, though his sister still went on in her insane and purposeless way. "One, two, three!" If she had only said, "four, five, six!" to vary it, it would have been some relief; but that tiresome muttering almost set him wild. He commenced an impatient promenade of the carpet, while the three idiots, as he mentally styled them, still sat comfortably round the table, not noticing him at all. At last, however, the window was thrown up, and he was gazing far out into the night.

"Kit-choo! Kit-choo!" Miss Ward sneezed. "I feel a draught, Miss Lyle, don't you?"

"Mr. Ward has the window up."

"The window up! Oh dear! dear!" She drew her shawl round her shoulders. "I shall take my death of cold, John! Brother!"

"Mr. Ward." Gertrude's light hand was laid on his arm. "You are making the room too cold for your sister."

"Too cold! Why, it is suffocating." The window was brought down with a bang, while Miss Ward gave a succession of little shrill screams.

"Oh, my nerves! my poor nerves!"

Confound your nerves, he had it on the tip of his tongue to say; but could not say it in the young girl's presence. "Hang that girl! I wish she was in Jericho!" He rang the bell. "James, this fire is not large enough to roast an ox. Miss Ward wishes it of the adequate size." Shutting the door in the puzzled man's face, he made his way towards the study.

"Brother! brother! I am sure he is going to be very ill. I wonder if he would take a little ginger." Miss Ward was quite upset by her brother's ill temper, and their pleasant evening was evidently spoiled.

Mr. Ward meanwhile plodded up and down his study, ashamed of having made such a display of temper, and wondering what Gertrude would think. "I suppose she will set me down as more of a boor than ever," and certainly he could not expect to compare very brilliantly with the good-natured, good-tempered, gentlemanly Ralph. "I suppose this is an end of all that is sensible in Ralph; he has learned to make himself ridiculous, he is so very weak; and that girl is perfectly insufferable, she is growing more spoiled every day. Was ever man blessed with such a household!" And so the impatient tramp was kept up; but we will leave the lion in his den, and go back to the parlor.

"Brother must surely be ill, Miss Lyle. He suffers from attacks in his head," Miss Ward tried to explain. "I noticed he has had too much color for the last few days. Don't you think he had a great deal of color, Ralph?"

"Yes! I should rather say he had." And temper, too, he added mentally, as Ralph, for

the first time, was seriously provoked with his friend.

"Don't hurry, Ralph," as he took up his hat intending to go.

"It is late, I am afraid."

"No! quite early; stay a little while longer; I have been so busy we have not had our usual talk, and Miss Lyle has some more worsted ready for you."

Easily persuaded, Ralph again resumed his seat; and Mr. Ward was more incensed than ever, by hearing the pleasant hum of laughter and talk. Evidently he had not disturbed them at all, and it was very provoking to feel of so little consequence. He would have liked to have gone back, but pride interfered: so the proud man stayed in his study, and wondered what she would think, and then was angry with himself for wondering, but thought all the more. He even got out her poor little handkerchief to burn, as he was learning his lesson so badly; but something held him back, and he could not do it. So the handkerchief was put in solitary confinement again. "That girl is perfectly insufferable; I would send her off if it were not for the children; but I owe them some duty, poor little wretches. It is strange how they take to her. She is a mystery altogether, an exceedingly disagreeable mystery. I wonder what she can think?" So he mused on, uncomfortable and displeased with himself, and every one else, till the servant came to put out the light, and awakened him from his reverie.

CHAPTER XII.

It was one evening, towards the end of November, that we again find Gertrude with the children, in Miss Ward's sitting-room. It had been a cold, wet day, and the children had not had their usual walk; so, to keep them quiet and amused, Gertrude was telling them stories.

Giovannino was on her lap, with one chubby arm round her neck, making sad riot with her smooth hair; and Rosa, sitting close by her, was listening with eager, wide-opened eyes. The child had Gertrude's hand in hers, and held it to her lips, while she pleaded for more stories.

"I am tired, Rosa; only one more story, and then tea will be ready." It was a lovely picture; the young girl's pure, fresh face, and the little ones', warmed and made rosy by the bright grate-fire. Ever since Gertrude had been with them there was the greatest change noticeable in their appearance; they were always neat now; and though their clothes were simply made, they fitted well and were becoming. Rosa's long jetty curls were her pride, and she took more pains with the little girl, as she loved the boy most, and was afraid of being unjust.

"What shall it be, Rosa—a fairy story or a true story?"

"Oh! a fairy story."

"What shall it be, Vannino—a fairy story?"

"Yes!" The child was too comfortable and happy to care, as he nestled more closely in her arms.

Mr. Ward was passing the open door, and paused to look at the pretty group, and listen to the fairy stories, too. He came in so noiselessly that the children and Gertrude were entirely unconscious of the addition to their party.

"A wonderful fairy story about a giant." Rosa, who was fond of excitement, clung to the unreal.

"If you hug me so tight, Vannino," as he gave her a fervent kiss, "I can't tell my story."

"Kiss me, too, Miss Lyle." Rosa's face was raised, and Gertrude gave the required embrace.

"Do please begin, Miss Lyle."

"You won't ask me for any more? I will tell you a wonderful story about a giant, if you promise not to ask me for any more. But I will have to keep it unless you do promise, as it will be long."

"Oh, how nice! Dear, good, beautiful Miss Lyle." The eager child again pressed her hand to her lips. "I won't ask you for any more; and Floss must listen too." She raised the dog's head on her knee. "Floss knows a great deal, Miss Lyle. See, he is looking at you." She patted the smooth brown head.

"He is a dear old dog, Rosa. But I am so tired, my throat will crack if I don't commence. I cannot speak another word, for I never could tell my story if my throat were cracked." Gertrude laughed, and having made Vannino more comfortable, commenced her story.

"It is to be all out of your head, Miss Lyle?"

"Yes, Rosa." The child, who liked Gertrude's stories better than those she had read out of books, drew closer to her as she listened. "Things were much finer in the days of our grandmothers, as every boy and girl knows." She looked at the children, who were too much interested to interrupt her. "The sky was bluer; the sun shone more brightly; the lakes were wider and deeper, and the rivers longer than we have ever known them. Well, in the days of my grandmother there lived a giant on the top of a very high mountain. The mountain was so high, it was away up among the clouds, and no one had ever reached the top of it where the giant lived, for men who tried ascending it grew giddy long before they reached a twentieth part of the distance.

"My grandmother was a very old lady, and had lost all her front teeth except two, so she could not tell the story very distinctly, but I will do my best to tell it to you."

"Oh, how funny!" both the children laughed.

"Rosa, you interrupt me, dear, and I must have all my breath for my story."

"The giant, who lived on this high mountain, from living so high, had a very good appetite, as the air was purer than when it reaches us. He ate everything that came in his way, and it was particularly bad in the summer time; for when it grew warm, and the weather was relaxing, he reached down his arms hundreds and thousands of miles, and lifted up the people to eat.

"The good fairies put the wicked people in his way; but he ate so much, and there were so many bad people, there was great danger that

there would be no one left. So both good and bad fairies joined together to punish him. They turned the world upside down for one night, so that all the rivers and lakes ran up to the top of the mountain and deluged it; and it was very damp, even when they ran back again.

"The giant took a fearful cold—such a cold as had never been heard of before. He coughed at least a million times, so the thunder shook the world; and he sneezed so hard that quite a spray descended from the mountain, and the whole world caught cold too; even the birds had colds, and one crow in particular sneezed so hard that he split his tongue, and he commenced to talk—for every one knows it is only necessary to split a crow's tongue, and he will talk certainly; and so the crow commenced."

"Is that so, Miss Lyle?"

"People say so, dear." Gertrude went on, while the most attentive listener wondered at the nonsense she could so easily command. "This was the crow's story: All my race was mourning for the sins of the world. My grandmother, who was vain, and thought herself finer than the rest of her family, decided that she would wear colors, so she bought a yellow cravat. My grandfather was to tie it for her; but his bill ran into her eye, and hurt her so, she jumped, and he tied the cravat so tightly, she choked to death. So ended my grandmother."

"Then the crow told about his brothers and sisters. It was all very interesting to him; but the birds went to sleep, for they were not snobs, and did not care for family. So the crow was angry for two whole days, and would not speak a word."

"What an ugly crow! That was like me before you came, Miss Lyle."

"Yes, Rosa, it was." She again went on with her story.

"What shall I do to make people look at me?" As the crow was vain, he asked the owl; for it being the bird of wisdom, was the only one who could talk.

"Travel and learn," said the owl.

"So the crow resolved to travel, and he packed his valise and started on his journey. And now we will read the crow's diary: 'I have been in Iceland, where there is nothing at all to eat. Some of the people grow so thin, they turn into grasshoppers, and are eaten up by the frogs. I saw one old lady and her grandson eaten up; it was a very sad sight. The air is so clear and the sky so blue that the people all look ghastly, even the fat ones. But some are so thin you can see right through them the rocks and stones on the other side. I went to church, and the words were frozen, as they fell out of the minister's lips, into all sorts of glorious shapes, till it was beautiful to see them. I pecked at one or two with my bill, and have felt quite happy and good ever since. I am a wonderful person here. The king thought so highly of me, he wanted my statue cast in ice; but the very thought made me shudder, so I refused the honor. There is another thing peculiar here. The people have very long noses; so long are they that they have to keep them pinned up with hair pins, and only let them down on a holiday.'"

"How very funny!" both the children shouted. Rosa stopped suddenly in her laugh, and pointed to the chair behind them. "Papa, Miss Lyle."

Listen, papa." And running to him, the child, who had been nearer her father since the scene with the dog, took him by the hand, as he rose from his seat laughing.

"Now go on, Miss Lyle."

"Not to night, Rosa. It is tea-time."

"It was such a nice, funny story!" the child pleaded. "Do, Miss Lyle!"

"I am sorry I interrupted you, Miss Lyle; I was quite interested about the crow." He smiled at her blushing face. "Why is she always so anxious to get away from me, and never at her ease?" Mr. Ward softened on seeing the children with her, and wondered at her power of amusing them so well. "Don't go, Miss Lyle! It is early yet." He drew Rosa on his knee. The child sat uncomfortably, as she did not feel at her ease in her unusual position and wanted to be put down. "You have a very vivid imagination, Miss Lyle."

"Not at all, sir! It is very easy to interest children; they require so little."

"Don't you think that rather exciting food for these young ears?" Trying to draw her out.

"No, sir! I think more harm is done by good, little moral tales, if long continued, than fairy stories. Children do not naturally like them, and they are not candid if they say they do; it soon makes them stupid; while fairy tales give the imagination so much scope, and suggest so many new ideas." She could not help smiling.

"Yes; I should rather think they did." Mr. Ward smiled too.

"Miss Lyle knows such beautiful stories; and she tells them whenever we are good. Is not that nice?"

"How often are you good, Rosa?"

"Always now, papa." She looked doubtfully at Gertrude, as being released she drew closer to her. "Am I good, Miss Lyle?"

"Yes, Rosa! Vannino and yourself are both good children."

"I was not good yesterday." She regretfully shook her head.

"What did you do, Rosa?"

"I tore Miss Lyle's dress! I was so sorry!" Her eyes filled with tears at the remembrance.

"It was an accident; you did not mean it, dear!" Gertrude put her arm round the child.

"What did Miss Lyle do?" the father again asked.

"She mended it!" Rosa's face brightened.

"She mended it so I could not find the place."

"Miss Lyle is cross sometimes, Rosa?" her father said to tease her.

"No, never!" Very earnestly. "She never whips." Poor little things! they had had a hard life, and had not quite forgotten.

"We must go, it is nearly tea-time." Gertrude rose with Vannino still in her arms.

"That child is too heavy."

"Not at all, sir." She held him more tightly to her.

"Good evening, Mr. Ward!"

"Good evening, Miss Lyle!" He waited and listened till their voices were no longer heard.

"She is a good girl; I wonder why she shuns me so? Those children are wonderfully changed in so short a time; they are almost good-looking now, and they were such little frights before."

CHAPTER XIII.

"MRS. LIVINGSTON was here this morning."

"Was she, Margaret? I would have liked to have seen her." Mr. Ward had been more amiable since the unfortunate evening in the parlor, as he felt thoroughly ashamed of himself.

"She was looking better than I have seen her for a long time. She asked for Miss Lyle, and appeared quite delighted with her. I wish Mrs. Livingston would remember she is the governess, and not treat her as she does—I am afraid Miss Lyle will be spoiled. She asked her to come and spend the holidays there, as she supposed the children would have a holiday."

"What did Miss Lyle say?"

"Miss Lyle acted nicely; she said she would like to go very much, and then asked me if I thought it would be convenient. I told her I saw no reason why she could not go, for I was very glad it happened, as Lucy Cecil is coming for a few days, and it will be pleasant to have the house to ourselves when dear Lucy is here. Don't you think so, brother?"

We see Miss Ward intended reviving her pet scheme; for Lucy Cecil, being five years younger than her brother, was of a suitable age. "And such a dear girl!" as she told Gertrude.

"Are you not glad, John, that dear Lucy is coming?"

"Hang dear Lucy! you know I hate women. Is Miss Lyle going?"

"Yes, certainly she is! Do you know I should not wonder if Ralph's fancy for Miss Lyle amounted to something."

"There you go again, Margaret! What crank have you got in your head now? Women never can be satisfied unless they are match-making. Don't you know Ralph is not a marrying man? he takes love as he does his breakfast, and feels in duty bound to fall in love with every woman he meets."

"I don't know, brother; but when his mother sides with him I think it looks more serious."

"What can you mean, Margaret?"

"Before Miss Lyle came down to see Mrs. Livingston we were talking of governesses; I thought I would put Mrs. Livingston on her guard, so I told her what I thought about their being kept in their places. Mrs. Livingston was quite indignant. I am always in the wrong." Miss Ward raised her handkerchief to her eyes.

"She was very angry, and asked me if I had no charity. Just to think of it, brother. No charity!"

"Do try and come to the point, Margaret, without all this shilly-shallying."

"Well then, brother, she wanted to know what a woman could do if she were left without means, and cited Miss Mason's case. I was sorry I said anything." Her handkerchief was again in requisition. "I have never seen dear, kind Mrs. Livingston so angry before; but I suppose it is my fate always to give offense." Miss Ward sobbed.

"Do stop crying, Margaret; what has all this to do with Miss Lyle?"

"Can't you see, brother, hearing Ralph rave about her as he does, Mrs. Livingston would not bring them together in the same house unless she wished something to happen?" And much too modest to mention the words, Miss Ward shook her head. "It will be a very good thing for her, poor dear; but I am sorry on the children's account. Poor little things, how they will miss Miss Lyle! She is a very estimable young person, brother; I don't think you have ever done her justice."

"I do wish you would let the girl alone, and not always be hatching schemes. She is well enough; and Ralph shall not worry her while she is in this house at least."

"She takes the worrying kindly, brother." Miss Ward smiled aggravatingly.

"You always like to be contradictory, Margaret; it is an abominable habit. I wish you would stop it. Miss Lyle is studious, and has other things to think of than Ralph and his nonsense." He brought his hand down on the table. "You shall not aggravate that girl, Margaret, or put false ideas in her head; she is well enough, only leave her in peace."

"I know what I know; but I suppose I must not speak." Miss Ward pursed up her mouth.

"What do you know, Margaret?" But Miss Ward, delighted at being wiser than her brother, shook her head.

"What do you know; are you dumb?"

"No matter, brother, I will not waste time making schemes."

"Margaret, I am surprised at your wasting so much time over the governess. I should think my sister would have more pride. Has the Ward

family degenerated in you?" He drew himself up stiffly.

"I suppose so, brother! But, at any rate, I have good eyes, and can see a thing now and then." Feeling provoked, and wanting to worry her brother, she blurted out her secret. "Miss Lyle is to study nature on horseback, with Ralph as an escort." The word study was emphasized. "She is to study ferns and trees from an elevated position." Miss Ward, in her indignation, had forgotten the trees were leafless, and the ferns long since gone.

"She will freeze. Margaret, are you insane? Ralph shall not make her do any such thing."

"He don't make her; she expects to have a very pleasant time; and, as to freezing, it promises to be a mild winter, just as the fall was unusually severe. It is lovely weather for horseback riding."

"But does Miss Lyle intend to distinguish herself in short skirts? You are so well posted, you must know everything."

"No; she is to have poor Helen Livingston's habit, that her mother has never had out of camphor since she died. Don't you think it looks serious now, brother? Mrs. Livingston offering her poor Helen's habit that she has always taken such care of. It was a lovely dark-blue cloth, and will be very becoming to Miss Lyle."

"I never heard any one talk as senselessly as you do, Margaret. I should suppose you could find something more important to think of."

"So I have, brother. I am getting dear Lucy's room ready."

"Pretty old Lucy! She must be thirty-three. Yes, she is exactly two years younger than I am."

"Oh, brother! You mistake; she is quite a girl."

"A pretty old girl, Margaret."

"John, John! How very ungentlemanly. I am very glad Miss Lyle is not here to hear you."

"Hang it, Margaret! Do you think I care? The governess's name is never out of your thoughts. I am beginning quite to dislike the girl."

"Will we give dear Lucy the blue room, or the green room, brother?" trying to interest him.

"Hang it! Give her the attic. I wish you could talk about something but women, Margaret; you know how I dislike the subject. When is Miss Lyle going?"

"Next week."

"What a relief! Then we can have a quiet house. I wish we could pack the children off some place too. Why don't you give her that pretty silver-mounted riding-whip I gave you long ago? You never use it; and she might like it."

"Do you think it a sensible present for a person in her station?"

"True; you confuse me so, Margaret, I quite forgot. I don't see how you can keep up such an eternal chatter." He left the room.

"Margaret is childish, poor thing; it is hard to find an interest in what she cares for; she has been a good sister. I must try and be patient, and humor her little fancies. She might as well let Miss Lyle have that whip, it is such a dog-in-

the-manger spirit keeping it; I dislike the principle of the thing." Mr. Ward walked back to tell his sister so. "A man has so much to interest him; but women, poor things, have only these little trifles. I wonder if Miss Lyle will be down this evening? I think I will put on my coat like Ralph's; it has more pockets, and is more convenient." Mr. Ward was in his room dressing for dinner, a very unusual thing for him.

"That is easy, and the pockets are very convenient;" he worked his arms up and down in the new coat. "I wonder if Margaret would like a blue cravat? Poor Margaret is changing sadly, and it is just as well to humor her!" He spent at least ten minutes trying to make his cravat look like Ralph's.

"I hope Margaret will be pleased;" and he took down the hand-glass and looked at his back; "women think so much of these little things. My hair is too long; I will have it cut. Trying to please one's sister gives one a great deal of trouble. I will let my moustache grow when Miss Lyle is gone; it would please Margaret; she used to like it, and Miss Lyle is such an abominably impertinent young woman, she would be sure to notice it."

"Poor dear Margaret, how much we will enjoy a little quiet together! Hang that Lucy Cecil! I forgot all about her." The soft thoughts melted. "I am sorry if what Margaret says is true about Ralph; a Livingston marry a governess; I can't even bear the thought; and Margaret always talked so much about unequal marriages. Women are as variable as weather-cocks, and there is no use putting any faith in them."

Unequal marriages are the work of the fiend." His face grew very dark as he thought of his own. "Heaven preserve Ralph from such a fate! He shall not sacrifice himself if I can prevent it."

It was a pleasant home scene—the little circle in the parlor that evening; Miss Ward and Miss Lyle busy working, while Mr. Ward was reading aloud to his sister. Miss Lyle had said she thought he was selfish—keeping all the good things to himself, therefore he was reading aloud to please his sister.

"Snodgrass! What a strange name! Dickens must have had something to do with it." Mr. Ward laid down the paper. "I am very fond of a good name, are you, Miss Lyle?"

"Very: I dislike very much names of one syllable." She stopped, and bit her lips in vexation. Miss Ward was too much occupied to notice, and only her brother heard.

"I suppose you like long names; Livingston, for instance? Perhaps you would like to change your name to Livingston?"

"I hope I may, some day." She looked saucily at him. "It is a beautiful name—Livingston." She said the name slowly and lovingly, while Miss Ward looked significantly at her brother.

"Of all brazen young women she certainly takes the lead." Mr. Ward drew back disgusted. "I suppose she will be asking Ralph to take her for better or worse. Worse, most decidedly. There is something rather taking in such cool-blooded impudence!" Looking up from his paper, which he had again resumed, he caught Gertrude's laughing, saucy eyes regarding him intently.

"It is bitter cold out to-night. How are you all?" Ralph's bright, cheery face was added to the group. "Hillo, Ward! Quite the thing." He turned Mr. Ward round for a better view, much to his indignation. "You have been to my tailor, I see."

"What a fellow you are, Ralph, to notice everything!" Mr. Ward was much embarrassed. "I bought the coat at Margaret's desire, and I rather like it; it has so many pockets." Not noticing his sister's puzzled face, as she held her hand to her head and wondered if she were dreaming, for she really could not remember. No doubt she was losing her memory, it was a troublesome and disagreeable thought; but it never entered into her mind that her brother might be guilty of an untruth.

"Miss Ward has good taste; let me congratulate you. You are quite an exquisite; ready for Fifth Avenue, or any place else." Ralph laughed merrily at his friend's discomfiture, who was provoked, and did wish Ralph had a little more common sense.

"My mother has been telling me good news, Miss Lyle; we are to have you next week. I put on one of mother's old skirts, and have been riding 'Black Bess' all morning, so she will be in good training for you."

"You are very kind, Mr. Livingston." Again that loving accent on the name. "We will have glorious rides, and I can use the pretty riding-whip Miss Ward so kindly gave me." She looked up brightly in his face.

"I wish I could use it across her back; that girl has no shame; I can't stand this love-making in public." Mr. Ward commenced an impatient

promenade of the carpet, as he always did when provoked.

"You have quite won my mother's heart, Miss Lyle. She intends giving you my sister's room, and everything belonging to her, while you are with us. I had a lovely sister, about your age, Miss Lyle." His face was very serious. "She died two years ago, and my mother has never been the same since we lost Helen."

"What a lovely name! Helen Livingston! My father said"—she stopped, confused. "Do tell me more about your sister, Mr. Livingston."

"I cannot tell you all she was to us, Miss Lyle." Ralph paused, much moved. "There is one other Helen Livingston. What were you saying, Miss Lyle?"

"Nothing." She blushed deeply.

"There is another Helen Livingston I have never seen; the cousin Mr. Ward is fond of teasing me about. My Uncle Henry married a second time, much against my father's advice, who dearly loved his first wife, and could not approve of little Helen's having a step-mother. This cousin and my sister Helen were named after their grandmother, my father's mother. I know very little about my cousin Helen, as I have never seen her. Five years ago I was in Savannah, and passed a few days with my Uncle Henry; Helen was away at school at the time. I was thoroughly disgusted with his wife, who is not such a woman as he should have married; and they were all much distressed at home by the reports I gave them. Soon after my return home my father was taken ill and died. Three years after we had to mourn my Sister Helen's loss. We were naturally so taken up with our

own sorrow that we lost sight of my uncle's family. News of his death came when my sister was very ill, and we were too much weighed down by trouble to inquire the particulars. Some time after I called to see my uncle's lawyer in New York, as we received no answer to the letters written to his wife. Mr. Mason told me my cousin Helen had spent a few hours in New York two months before the time I inquired. He described her as a beautiful girl, but much distressed by her father's loss. He said he did not like Mrs. Livingston's conduct; she appeared afraid to leave Helen alone with him, and he could not enter into the explanations he wanted. He gave her a box of jewels that had been her mother's, and explained as fully as he could how her money was invested. My uncle had left all he possessed, which was very little, to his wife. Helen would inherit a large fortune from her mother when she was twenty-one; but until that time she would only receive a small sum yearly, sufficient to defray her expenses in dress. She was left by her father to the guardianship of her step-mother, an arrangement Mr. Mason did not approve of. It was a strange will, but Mr. Mason explained it by saying my uncle had a mania for speculating, and was very unfortunate. He had a chivalrous feeling of honor; and when Helen's mother died, had her money tied up for his daughter's use so that he could not touch it. He thought she might be married when she reached her twenty-first birthday, but at any rate by that time could best judge for herself what was right. My mother was far from well, or I would have gone to see Helen, as we both took the liveliest interest in her.

Her father, with the short-sightedness of human nature, had not calculated the possibility of his own death, and the dependent position he would leave her in; his only idea appears to have been to have placed her money so that he could not use it. I have no idea where she is now; as I have made every inquiry I could for her, with no good result. She left her home eight months ago, and we can get none of the particulars from Mrs. Livingston, who has taken no notice of the letters I have written her. Mr. Mason received a letter from Helen dated at Savannah, telling him not to send her any more money, and not giving him her direction. It was evidently written in a great hurry, and is the only clew we have. It is the dream of my mother's life to find her, and it will be the happiest day of my own." He raised Gertrude's hand to his lips, as he could not withstand her moved, interested face.

"This is insufferable and disgusting!" The promenade was resumed with new vigor. "I am disappointed in Miss Lyle. I thought she had more sense; but she is as foolish as the rest of womankind. I don't see how I have ever made a friend of Ralph, he is so intolerably trifling. I wonder if all governesses are as insupportable? But, poor thing, it is not her fault. I shall tell Ralph plainly he must not act so ridiculously. He shall not worry her. Ralph is such a fool!—such a confounded fool! Hang him!"

CHAPTER XIV.

"PRUNES, prisms, persimmons. Why can't you say it, Vannino?"

"I can't," the little fellow lisped.

"But do try, Vannino. Prunes, prisms, persimmons." The words were dropped slowly and with difficulty from Rosa's lips.

"What is the matter, Rosa?" Gertrude, who had been reading, raised her eyes on hearing the little one's earnest words.

"Miss Lyle, is not Vannino a baby? He is seven years old, and he can't say prunes, prisms, persimmons."

"Well, why should he, Rosa?" Gertrude smiled.

"Why, I heard papa say that Miss Cecil should say prunes, prisms, persimmons every morning for an hour, to make her mouth decent. Do you think?"—her face was very earnest—"if I said it every morning for an hour, my mouth would be pretty? You know Aunt Margaret says I have a horrid mouth."

"Rosa, Rosa, you talk too much for a little girl!"

"It is true, Miss Lyle; I heard papa say so. Do you think it would make my mouth pretty?"

"I don't know, Rosa. Suppose you try." Gertrude laughed merrily, as the child pursed up her

rosy lips and said the hard words a great many times.

Mr. Ward, who was passing the room door, paused to listen to the children's prattle. He had fallen into the habit lately of listening to their talk with Gertrude. He explained to himself it was his duty to see they had not another Miss Moore to teach them what had better be left untaught.

"Rosa, come and read now, dear." She took the child's book from her hand, as she sat with her arm round her waist, holding her close to her. "Rosa, do mind your stops; that was a period, and you never paused at all. Make it a rule, Rosa, to sneeze whenever you come to a period, and it will teach you to pause long enough."

"But, Miss Lyle, I can't." The child was quite troubled, as she had learned to love Gertrude so much she liked to do all she told her.

"Well, if you can't, you will have to stop and think whether you can or not, and it will do just as well, as a reminder." Gertrude's face was perfectly serious.

"That Miss Lyle has the most peculiar way of teaching. I never knew any one talk as much nonsense with as serious a face, and give a good reason for it too." Mr. Ward smiled as he listened to their chatter. There was more in those children than he had any idea of, and he would be glad if Rosa grew up a sensible girl. He was glad to find, also, that he felt more interest in them. Miss Lyle was a peculiar young person, as his sister would say, and had a peculiar method of teaching; but at any rate, the softening influence was well used, and he could not find fault with her. He still listened for a little while

longer. Lucy Cecil was so tiresome that the children were quite a relief.

Miss Cecil had come sooner than she was expected, and Miss Ward congratulated herself that Miss Lyle would leave the next day. When the time of parting drew near, Miss Ward acknowledged to herself that she would miss the bright, lively girl who never tired of doing things for her comfort; and though it was only for a time, she was sorry Miss Lyle was going. She had fallen into the habit of letting Gertrude do all the talking, and listening herself, so that she rather dreaded the exertion now.

"Rosa, that is a good girl." Gertrude smiled pleasantly in the child's face as she stopped obediently at the next period and took out her handkerchief.

"I can't, Miss Lyle."

"Very well, dear; don't you see it served as a reminder?" Gertrude smiled again. Vannino had crept up to her side and was pulling her dress, evidently wishing to attract her attention. "Presently, Vannino,"—she laid her hand on his head—"presently." But as he grew more earnest, she bent down to hear what he had to say, so as not to interrupt Rosa.

"Papa, Miss Lyle." Vannino was very loyal in his love, and would have no stranger coming into the camp unseen by Gertrude. As she turned her head quickly, she saw Mr. Ward, who was annoyed at being caught, but who now came forward, on being detected, ready for a war of words.

"I paused, interested in your system of education." Mr. Ward smiled.

"In what way, sir?" Gertrude was quite serious, as she called the governess to her aid

"Will you please explain, if I am not encroaching on Rosa's lessons?"

"Not at all. Rosa will be very glad of a little rest."

"Why do you base such a serious point as education on such an insecure footing?"

"In plain English, you wish to know why I talk so much nonsense. I suppose you think I have no reason for doing it?" with still that serious face.

"Certainly. I hardly comprehend the reason."

"Well, then, sir, you must know children do not reason, and it is folly to be forever reasoning with them. It is well enough to reason occasionally on serious subjects, and a child will attend if you make your meaning sufficiently plain; but if you reason all the time, they will grow tired after awhile, and will not attend when the serious moments come; therefore I talk nonsense a greater part of the time. A child is guided by impulse and affection, and cannot understand reason as well as nonsense, which they like naturally. Interest children, and you will impress more forcibly what you wish on their minds than by any long treatise you could name. If I told Rosa who invented periods, and what was their use, she would soon grow tired and sleepy, and be no wiser; but if I told her to sneeze when she came to one, it is a natural idea, and easily done. When she comes to a period she will pause to look in my face, and smile at the idea; and she will remember my simple little lesson better than any long treatise."

"Satisfactorily argued, Miss Lyle. I had no idea you could be so eloquent." Mr. Ward smiled as the girl bit her lip and sharpened her weapons

for a new encounter, determined to rout the enemy from the field.

"Another thing, Mr. Ward. Nonsense draws the children to me, and interests them more in their lessons, which is a very good thing. They are always wondering what their strange Miss Lyle can have to say,—their audacious governess, that surprising young woman,—what wonderful things she can have to propound next."

It was Mr. Ward's turn to bite his lip now, as he wondered if the girl were a witch—she could read his thoughts so plainly. He did not have time to reply, though he felt subdued, not equal for another encounter, as his sister entered the room.

Miss Ward wanted to do her duty, and she steeled her heart more against Miss Lyle as she read its weakness. If Mrs. Livingston would spoil the girl, she at least would show her, while with her, that she must not forget her place as governess. Miss Ward felt provoked at herself for what she was going to do, as she knew Gertrude would understand; but still, for all that, would do her duty. It had been a settled thing that Gertrude should come down in the parlor every evening, but she intended showing her there was a difference when they had company.

"Miss Lyle, we will be very happy to see you down in the parlor this evening." Miss Ward, flushed and uncomfortable, blurted out the words. Mr. Ward applauded her good sense, but was angry with her nevertheless.

"Thank you very much, Miss Ward." The girl's face lost some of its sweetness, as she heaped her coals of fire on Miss Ward's devoted

head, for Gertrude, though on the alert to battle with Mr. Ward, was always gentle and kind with his sister. "It will be impossible for me to be with you this evening; I promised Rosa and Giovannino to stay with them all the evening, and I always keep my promise." Gertrude smiled pleasantly; glad that she had so good an excuse; and glad, too, to show the proud man that she was as proud as he was, and knew her place quite as well.

"But, Miss Lyle." Miss Ward, troubled and worried that she had defeated her own plans, remonstrated. She dreaded very much the exertion of entertaining Miss Cecil, and thought this evening Gertrude would do it for her; and here was one more evening of martyrdom she had taken on her own shoulders willfully. She thought Gertrude would be delighted with the invitation, as any governess should have been. But for all her ideas of what would be proper in a governess, she respected and liked the girl more for her pride, and felt more anxious to secure her. While Mr. Ward, who understood the trouble, wickedly stood by enjoying his sister's discomfiture.

"Miss Lyle, I told Miss Cecil so much about your music that she is quite anxious to hear you play."

"Miss Cecil must deny herself that pleasure." Gertrude straightened herself more stiffly; she could stand any amount of patronizing from Miss Ward, whose delicate health excused her, but with Miss Cecil it was quite different.

"Miss Lyle." Miss Ward was evidently distressed, and forgetting her resolution fast. "Won't you come down to oblige me?"

"I would do anything almost to oblige you, Miss Ward. I might have arranged my plans differently if I had known sooner; but I cannot break my word even for you. I have so much to do to-day I will be quite busy, and will not be able to gratify Miss Cecil."

"I am very sorry, dear." Provoked at her own foolishness, Miss Ward hurried out of the room, followed by her brother. "It is just as well, John dear, that Miss Lyle should be taught her place as governess; don't you think so?" She looked at her brother doubtfully.

"Just as well, certainly, Margaret." An amused smile played round his lips; he had forgotten his own discomfiture in his sister's. It was strange he should take so much pleasure in seeing his sister made uncomfortable by the governess; it was very strange, but so it was.

Miss Ward had many occasions to sigh over her own folly that evening; dear Lucy was not as pleasant as usual, and her brother would not assist her, so the evening dragged slowly on; as even Ralph did not come in.

Miss Cecil was a poetical young lady, with long, drooping brown curls, and light blue eyes. She had read a great many silly verses, which she always had ready to pour into any one's ears she met. When younger, the poetry sat gracefully on her shoulders, if sometimes tiresome; but at thirty-three the effect was quite different. Miss Ward had quoted her loveliness so many times, she had persuaded herself into believing it. She felt provoked that she missed Miss Lyle; and unconsciously compared the two women, much to Miss Cecil's disadvantage. They were not to be compared at all, as she told herself a great

many times; but still the comparison went on, for we cannot always control our thoughts. Mr. Ward sat by the table, and read and yawned through his paper; he did not feel tempted to put it down and listen, as he so often had done. It was a very stupid evening; he had ridden hard that morning, and riding always made him sleepy.

Meanwhile Gertrude read and talked to the little ones, who sat up an hour later by her permission. Mr. Ward found it necessary to go to his room several times that evening; and as his way always lay past the nursery, he could hear the merry laughter and talk through the door; for Gertrude had prudently closed it.

The children were evidently having a merry time, and Gertrude appeared to be the happiest of the three. He felt provoked when he heard her so full of life, and so little conscious of the advantages she had enjoyed down stairs. We see Mr. Ward was taking a leaf out of his sister's book. The evening passed away, miserably for the elder members of the family, and joyfully for the children.

Mrs. Livingston's carriage was to call for Gertrude early, so that she could breakfast with them. And Gertrude had bidden good-by to Miss Ward the night before, as Miss Ward always had her breakfast late. She kissed the children lightly, leaving a little present for each on their pillow to console them for her absence; for the little ones, tired by their last evening's pleasure, slept later than usual. Gertrude lingered longest by the boy; there was something so truly noble in the little fellow's face, she could not help loving him best. She was sorry for it, but could not help it.

Mr. Ward was up too, though it was so early; he wanted to see if Ralph would be foolish enough to come himself for Miss Lyle. He did not intend she should see him up so much before his usual time, but he wanted to satisfy himself about Ralph.

He was there, sure enough, and Mr. Ward determined unselfishly he would let him know what he thought. Miss Lyle might misconstrue, but still he owed it as a duty to the boy that he should show him his disapproval by his manner. Therefore he would put Miss Lyle in the carriage himself, all the time teaching the foolish boy his duty, for who could be his friend as well as himself? So Mr. Ward prepared his frostiest face for Ralph; but meeting Gertrude, the frost was all melted, as he had not the heart to frighten her for Ralph's fault. He soon was laughing at Gertrude's sallies, though nettled that she should take his early rising as a matter of course. Only one part of his duty he distinctly remembered—that was to put her in the carriage himself. It was not done easily or gracefully; he decidedly pushed Ralph aside, much to his disgust, as he helped Gertrude in. And then, congratulating himself on doing his duty to his friend, stood in the cold north wind till he was quite chilled, as he had no hat on. But was it any wonder he took such an interest in the boy he had known all his life?

CHAPTER XV.

THE house looked strangely cold and dark when Mr. Ward went back; most probably he had taken cold, standing so long without his hat. He had better have left Ralph to manage his own affairs than have done it for him. Ralph would make himself ridiculous any way, and his care was only shortening the time. The day passed heavily for both brother and sister, and there was a want felt that they had not known for a long time.

Poor little Rosa and Vannino wandered about the house lost, counting the days till Miss Lyle would come back, and worrying every one to know the time. It was a strangely dismal day, although dear Lucy was with them; and Miss Ward, feeling cross and tired, longed for bed-time.

Mr. Ward was followed by the children whenever in the house, and had them in his study with him. All his books were pulled down for their benefit, but there was no Miss Lyle to tell them stories, and the pretty pictures made them more conscious of her goodness, and made her loss more keenly felt, as they talked earnestly of her. That evening, strange to say, the cold, hard man sat where he had seen Gertrude so often in the children's school-room, with Vannino in his arms.

Miss Ward was provoked that Miss Cecil's visit should prove such a failure, and though she could not quarrel with her brother's returning love for his children, it was hard that he left her to do all the entertaining.

The children were inconsolable, and when night came their great loss was more strongly felt; so their father had gone with them to the school-room, and had taken Gertrude's chair at Rosa's request. He held his sobbing boy closely in his arms; it was strange he should console him in preference to Rosa, as Vannino was not his favorite child. Rosa had always been more or less noticed by him, while her brother was wholly forgotten.

"Friendship, love, indifference, hate! Friendship, love, indifference, hate!"

"What are you doing, Rosa?" as the little girl slowly crouched over the words.

"I am telling my fortune, papa, as Miss Lyle taught me." The child showed the paper to her father, where her own name and Miss Lyle's was printed, and she was crossing out the same letters in both names, to see the result. "Friendship, love, indifference, hate! Papa, Miss Lyle hates me, and I have friendship for her. It is not true." She again went over the letters. "It is not true, for I love Miss Lyle, and I know she don't hate me." She threw down her pencil in disgust. "Papa,"—a new thought came into her mind—"may I try your name and Miss Lyle's?" Her father watched her, strangely interested, while her little fingers printed the letters: "Friendship, love, indifference, hate! Papa, Miss Lyle has friendship for you, and you love Miss Lyle. Is it true?" She looked up in his face.

The man's face darkened, and his brow knit strangely, while Rosa looked at him frightened. Then his whole face was irradiated as he clasped both children to his heart, until they pleaded for mercy, so strong was the pressure. His little daughter had lifted the veil from his eyes, and the proud man knew that he loved Gertrude Lyle. Yes, Gertrude Lyle, the governess! The last word was forgotten in the discovery of his new happiness, and a tear trickled slowly down his cheek on Vannino's upturned face, as his heart was melted. The children were again held closely to him, and then thrust hastily away, frightened and crying at the father's strange conduct, as he left them and strode hastily down to his study.

John Ward loved Gertrude Lyle, the governess! The arrow was entering deeply, and the bleeding wound smarted. All that night pride and love fought a battle, and pride conquered. He was cold and more disagreeable than of old when he met his sister, and poor Miss Ward wondered if the world was all turned topsy-turvy on account of Miss Lyle's absence.

Two days passed away delightfully with Gertrude, who was happy in her pleasant evenings and rides. She missed the excitement and contradiction of her life with Mr. Ward, and though she was having a pleasant time, she thought of and missed the children, and would be very glad to see them again.

Mrs. Livingston had told her Mr. Ward's history; and, strangely interested in many noble deeds he had done, she was glad to hear it, and have everything satisfactorily explained; while the word "boor" was entirely eradicated from its

place in her mind. "Ralph and herself" (as she had learned to call him) had grown great friends; there was a secret understanding between the two, and it was always "Ralph and Gertrude," now.

It was the morning of the third day of her stay; Ralph had gone some distance into the country, and Gertrude was to take her ride, attended by the groom alone. She rode remarkably well, and the riding-dress was very becoming. She cantered briskly along, the wind blowing through and loosening her hair that she had tried to arrange plainly, as she considered right in her present position.

Mr. Ward, cold and gloomy, as on her first arrival, was taking a morning walk when he met her; his head was held down and there was a tired, listless air about him that pained her to see. She remembered Miss Ward's plans as regarded Miss Cecil, and though she wished him to be happy, she doubted if it were in Lucy Cecil's power to make him so; and with the strange contradiction of human nature, was very glad to see him looking so out of sorts.

"Good morning, Mr. Ward." She tapped his shoulder with her whip as he was passing, not noticing her in his hurry. It was such a surprise that he forgot his part, and his whole face lighted as he stepped eagerly forward and caught her hand, which he raised to his lips. Gertrude looked astonished, but did not snatch her hand away; he poured out an eager flood of inquiries for her health and happiness. Even Mrs. Livingston and Ralph were asked for, as his heart had grown so large with love it could take in all. Then Gertrude's queries for Miss Ward and the

children had to be answered; and finding that he could no longer prolong their interview, he said "Good morning." Gertrude was thinking of his sad life, so her greeting was glad, too, and their war of words was forgotten as she shook his hand warmly.

"Give a great deal of love, and many kisses to Rosa and Vannino for me. Tell them I think a great deal of them, and Ralph will bring me for a little while to-morrow to see them." She smiled brightly as she cantered on.

Ralph! Had it gone so far? He felt strangely humbled. It was his own fault if he had gained her dislike, and Ralph her love. Love was in the ascendant, and he determined to do all he could to win her love for his own and his children's sake. Dreamy and pleasant was his walk; he was happier than he had ever been, even if Ralph had already won her love. That thought was very bitter; he was glad that she would be happy and would try and be contented in her happiness. She had taught the children and himself that old and most beautiful lesson of love and perfect charity with all; for, was not Rosa always gentle now with her Aunt Margaret? Should she be so ill requited? No, if she loved Ralph he would do all he could for her happiness, as she was worthy of any man's winning. He walked on, strangely softened by his love, and the brackets round the word "governess" were torn away entirely, and the heart so deeply wounded by rough treatment was filled with love and charity to all.

How sad it is that where so much was noble, the good could not hold its sway supreme! But alas for poor faulty human nature! the brightest

beams are too often hidden under so dark a cloud, we never realize their brilliancy. Such was the misfortune of my hero. He had been so chilled and deceived in the outset of his life that the thawing process promised to be slow, in disregard of all his good resolutions.

Gertrude meanwhile rode back, awed and pleased; there was something noble in Mr. Ward, and he strangely interested her. She made a vow, too, to do all she could to bring back the father's love for his children. She would answer him no more with quick retort, but all should be softened for Vannino's and Rosa's sake. She did not know that her task would be so easy; already her work was under way.

"Rosa, Vannino." The children ran out to meet him, for they had clung to their father the last few days, and were no longer the poor, forlorn little ones who shuddered at his presence. "Miss Lyle is coming to see you to-morrow for a little while." The messages and story of their meeting was told over patiently. Over and over again—he never tired, but would talk as long as they pleased about it. Miss Ward, standing by, marveled at the change in both father and children, and blessed Gertrude Lyle in her inmost heart, though the word governess came trippingly on her tongue.

"Miss Lyle is coming to see us to-morrow; may we have a fête?"

Aunt Margaret could not resist the children, and she did not care to, but was quite as eager as they were. All day the whole house was on the alert to do honor to their fête, much to Miss Cecil's disgust. Was it not all for Gertrude Lyle, the governess?

CHAPTER XVI.

"It is beautiful out, Aunt Margaret." Rosa entered, as usual tugging Vannino after her. "Ann took us down to the gate, where we could see Miss Lyle if she came. It is so nice inside of the gate, I wanted to stay, but I didn't think you could do without me." A lively discussion followed about the cakes and sweetmeats that were ready waiting for their little feast. Miss Cecil listened to all their discussions, cross and irritated that so much care should be taken for the governess. "Dear Lucy was not looking as lovely as usual this morning," Miss Ward decided, and felt provoked with her for it. So, many questions were asked concerning her health and comfort, for Miss Ward's heart was beating in full sympathy with the children's, and Gertrude's little visit was looked forward to almost as eagerly by her. "How very glad she would be when Miss Lyle came home again, as the children were growing decidedly too much for her!" she reasoned, and excused her heart's weakness.

"Miss Lyle may not come." Miss Cecil, determined to make herself disagreeable, tried to coax the children to her, for she saw their father watching them, and, worldly-wise in all, Miss Cecil thought they were a good opening to his heart. Miss Cecil entered fully into Miss Ward's

schemes, and would have been very happy to be mistress in the comfortable home where she was staying. She did not know that his heart, which had been closed so long, was only opened through his love for Gertrude Lyle.

"Miss Lyle may not come, as she is having such a pleasant time, Rosa."

"Miss Lyle never tells lies." Her indignation was plainly written in her flashing dark eyes and the scornful curl of her upper lip. She would have liked to stamp her foot as she used to do; but she remembered what Miss Lyle had said the last time she had done it, so her tiny foot was pressed tightly down on the carpet.

"Miss Lyle is beautiful." Rosa knew the best way of teasing Miss Cecil, and was using her most fitting weapons.

"And good, Rosa," said Vannino, clasping his hands eagerly; "more beautiful than all the world." She appealed to her brother, who poured forth a torrent of eager approvals.

"I love her so, Rosa."

"And so do I, Vannino."

It was hard for Miss Cecil to sit by and hear the praises of the governess on every lip, and she herself of so little importance. She felt more provoked as she looked at Mr. Ward, whose smiling face echoed the children's words; while sure of sympathy from him, they call to him to listen to their story. Then long discussions as to what they would do were poured into his patient ears; nothing was too minute, or could bear too close a scrutiny to satisfy them.

"What is that?" Vannino, less impulsive than his sister, was flattening his nose against the window, as he listened eagerly. "Rosa, Miss

Lyle!" The little fellow jumped up and down, quite as excited as Rosa. Then the door was burst open, and they almost tumbled down the steps in their eagerness to meet her.

The spirited horse was at last controlled, and Gertrude was lifted from the saddle by Ralph.

"Miss Lyle, Miss Lyle!" Rosa's poor little heart was very full, and she sobbed on her shoulder, while Vannino, after receiving a warm kiss, stood at a distance, taking in the full beauty of her dress; he had much of the philosopher about him. "Miss Lyle is very beautiful!" was at last his verdict, as he again pressed close to her.

"Rosa, dear, don't cry so. I will think you are not glad to see me."

"Oh, Miss Lyle!" Rosa held her gauntleted hand in hers tightly, as if she were afraid she would go, while she poured forth a confusion of eager inquiries. "We have missed you so, Miss Lyle!" Her large dark eyes were very plaintive.

"Have you, darling? But we will make Aunt Margaret take cold," for, looking up, Gertrude saw Miss Ward standing on the upper step, entirely forgetting, in her genuine excitement of the moment, she did not have her usual wrappings on. Very warm was the embrace she gave Gertrude, as the tears stood in her eyes, and she told her how much she had missed her. She had her long chapter of accidents to relate, and many were the appeals for Gertrude's sympathy. But as she explained afterwards to her brother, it was just as well occasionally to unbend and show Miss Lyle she approved of her system with the children.

The children's feast was quite a success; all the pleasanter, Mr. Ward decided, as dear Lucy

had a headache and could not join them. Mr. Ward was kind and indulgent, watching the children's wants, so that his sister and Miss Lyle could enjoy themselves freely together. Occasionally he would wince, for Ralph's name came so easily to her lips when she turned to him for sympathy; but he noticed that she turned to himself quite as often, so the sting was not so deep.

There was a pretty, doubting, hesitating look in the eyes she raised to his, as if asking his indulgence if she were wrong. Then Rosa and Vannino poured forth question after question, all oddly timed and out of place, as children's questions usually are; for Rosa, in the same sentence that she praised grapes, or bonbons, or Gertrude, would appeal to her father if she were not beautiful. Aunt Margaret had to say "governess" many times, though with but poor success, as her lesson was soon forgotten, and she was almost as eager and interested as the children. Laughing, joking, and happy, the time passed away only too swiftly for the merry party.

"It is half-past two. I had no idea it was so late." Gertrude, remembering that she had promised Mrs. Livingston to be home at three to go out in the carriage with her, rose hastily from her seat.

"You need hardly, I think, be in such a hurry to leave the children, Miss Lyle." She intended saying *us*, but the other word was hastily substituted.

"I am not in a hurry, as Rosa and Vannino know, but I like to keep my word; and I do not want to keep Mrs. Livingston waiting, which I cannot help doing as it is." Gertrude was

distressed, when both the children crept close to her and begged for one more half hour.

"No, no, Rosa! I must go. But it won't be for very long." Seeing their eyes filled with tears, she bent over both, and submitted to their rather boisterous caresses. Then Miss Ward's warm kiss was pressed on her blushing cheek, and Vannino, child-like, wanted his father to kiss Miss Lyle too.

"You must not worry Miss Lyle, Vannino and Rosa, or she may never come back to us." Mr. Ward's face was much softened, and a bright light shone in his eyes as, followed by the eager children, Gertrude and himself amused themselves with admiring and petting the handsome horse she had ridden. Ralph was listening to Miss Ward, who was busy sending a long string of messages by him to his mother.

Miss Ward had seen Lucy Cecil's face at an upper window watching them, and again she remembered her part of keeping the governess in check. Mr. Ward had seen Miss Cecil's face too, but appeared to think more of helping Gertrude to hold her riding-habit easily than of pleasing her. He did not, as on a former morning, push Ralph hastily aside when he hurried forward to assist Gertrude in mounting, but took the bridle from the groom, and held the spirited horse's head, to make it more pleasant and easy for her. As Ralph, less thoughtful, turned back to answer a question from his sister, it was he who arranged her habit and settled her more comfortably in the saddle, while he told her how much the children had missed her, and how they would all welcome her return to them. Gertrude smiled brightly as she thanked him, though

her face changed when she asked for Miss Cecil and desired to be remembered to her.

They were all very kind, and she had nothing to wish for more in the way of attention; she did not like the change so perceptible, though it was a great improvement. She remembered Miss Ward's interest in Miss Cecil, and wondered if it was through her influence that Mr. Ward was so changed. She could not have solved the problem more easily or sensibly if she had tried, and though the result was so good, it did not suit her. She had known Mr. Ward as a boor, and had laid out her plans to soften him for his children's sake, and it was disagreeable to have her work taken out of her hands. She intended to be a martyr in their cause, though she dreaded her crown of thorns; but now that the burden was lifted, and there was no longer a need of martyrdom, she was not satisfied, but felt indignant.

It was the easiest and most comfortable way; but she had laid out so plainly what she would do for duty's sake, that she would rather have worn her crown of thorns, and if she had felt the sting, have merited the glory. She had done the hardest work in taming the children's unruly tempers, and it was so unpleasant to see a stranger fill her place, and claim all the laurels which were of right her own. She had quarreled with Mr. Ward in her own mind for months, as being such a boor; and though she knew the change was a decided improvement, there was that unsatisfied want there is always to be found, and she would rather have had the boor in his boorishness.

She had received more care and attention in

those few hours than during all her stay with them; but the care had not pleased her, and she pined for her old war of words and disagreements with her host. It would be intolerably stupid to witness his love-making; and her crown of martyrdom was coming to her, as she thought, only in a different and less pleasant form. So Gertrude rode back with Ralph, and was not the bright, lively companion she had been, for those troubling thoughts held their sway. Ralph was patient, and did all the talking himself, leaving her to her dreams.

"I am glad to see Ward won over by his children at last, poor fellow! He has had a sad life. He owes you a great debt, Gertrude. I should think you would be pleased."

"Yes; very much." The words came slowly and reluctantly.

"How devoted those children are to you, Gertrude,—and their father——"

"Yes; Mr. Ward is much changed for the better, no doubt owing to Miss Cecil's visit."

"Phew!" Ralph gave a shrill whistle. "I knew Miss Ward was trying some new dodge, and had some new irons in the fire, by her manner, which always betrays her. It is strange how women get one idea in their head, and hang on to it: this was Miss Ward's scheme ten years ago at the very least. Miss Cecil must be——. But it is not polite to inquire into a lady's age." And Ralph laughed gayly, much to Gertrude's edification.

"Miss Cecil is considered a beauty. I think Miss Ward said so."

"A beauty! Goodness! You make me shudder, Gertrude. She is very much like that tree

there before you." He pointed to a tall, spindle pine that stood near the road.

"Miss Ward told me she was fond of music and poetry." A smile lurked in Gertrude's eyes, and played round her lips, for she was enjoying Ralph's opinion of Miss Cecil; though no doubt she would be angry at herself for her ill nature, still it was pleasant. I would have liked to have seen Miss Cecil." And Gertrude looked musingly at another pine just in view, more of a spindle than the last.

"Would you? Then speak for yourself, Gertrude. She would have spoiled my appetite for dinner with her sour face. Don't grow cold and formal when you go back there, and forget your Brother Ralph, as I could not well bear the thoughts of losing my sister." Ralph looked earnestly in her face. "If ever you want a friend, call on me, and I will do my best. Let us renew our vow again, Gertrude." The young man was quite serious.

"Dear Ralph, you do not know how dear your brotherly care is. I shall never forget it; there was something that drew me to you the first time I saw you."

"Do you believe in affinities and communion of spirits?" And Ralph laughingly looked in her face. "I think there has been something of that kind in our case. But, to go back, you don't know how glad I was to see John so changed. Mother will be delighted to hear it, though she would not like to think Miss Cecil has anything to do with it, as that young lady is not a favorite with her. John was like his old self, only a hundred times better; he has always been such a good, noble fellow to me, that I have borne with

his roughness, knowing what lay beneath. He has watched me faithfully, and tried to keep me straight; and has been more like a father than a friend. You know he is eight years older than I am. He has such a horror of his old life that he has dinned it into my ears till I have grown quite impatient,—not to make an unequal marriage, and never to marry a woman whose family I had not known all my life." Ralph bit his lip as he remembered Gertrude had never spoken frankly on the subject of her past life; which had been a cause of complaint with Miss Ward.

"Poor Mr. Ward! It is very sad."

"If you had only known him as I have, you would understand him better. His character is entirely changed from what it was before his marriage; for that woman was a fiend, and led him a fearful life before she left him. He was more like his old self to-day than I have known him for a long time."

"I wonder if he will marry Miss Cecil?"

"I don't believe he could be persuaded, even by his sister, to take such a step."

"But he knows her so well," Gertrude interrupted.

"Yes, that is an advantage. I know poor John would rather lay down his life a hundred times than marry a woman he did not thoroughly know."

And Ralph was uncomfortable again, conscious that in his eagerness he had been rude. But then certainly his sweet, bright-faced companion, while she looked so seriously into his eyes, would not take his foolish words to herself.

CHAPTER XVII.

GERTRUDE'S holiday passed pleasantly, in riding, music, and Mrs. Livingston's and Ralph's society. Mrs. Livingston had that rare charm, we so seldom see, of making herself companionable to the young. She did not, by being childish and ridiculous, strive to make herself agreeable; but she had all the sweetness and dignity of age, with the loving remembrances of her own youth, and all the aspirations and disappointments peculiar to that period. The trials of her young friends she could enter into without bringing herself down to their level; she could sympathize with them without making silly, aggravating speeches, showing that though her youth was long passed all its foolishness remained. We so often see this in life: age with all the folly of youth, but without the innocence and guilelessness peculiar to that most beautiful period of our lives. Age when carried with grace and dignity is truly to be venerated; but old age with all the follies of youth, and without its innocence, is a hideous mockery. It is like dressing a corpse up in silken robes, and all the gay, gaudy trappings of the world.

Although Gertrude had enjoyed her holiday to the full, ever since her little visit to Rosa and Giovannino she had felt restless, and could not

enter into her pleasures as eagerly as before. She did not think it right to spoil the children by indulgence of their wishes, and making them too dependent on her; but their perfect love and trust made her very happy, and she did not care to have it lightened one iota, never thinking to inquire the reason why it was so dear to her.

Gertrude was very anxious to be at home, but she did not wish to wound Mrs. Livingston, who had urged her to stay longer; and that lady had done so much for her pleasure, she was loth to appear as though she had not appreciated her kindness.

It is the sixth morning of Gertrude's stay, when we find her seated with Mrs. Livingston in their pretty morning-room. Gertrude always particularly enjoys these morning talks, as they are free from interruption, Ralph being away attending to whatever business he has on hand, and it is much too early for visitors. The bright winter sun is streaming in on her sunny-brown head as she bends over her netting, trying to take out a very troublesome knot in the fine silk. Mrs. Livingston is seated on the opposite side of the table, with some pretty, delicate work in her hand; she is playing with it rather than working, as she is busily studying her young companion's face.

She is fully ten years older than Miss Ward, but has carried her weight of years lightly, for though she has known heavy sorrow, the burden has been borne bravely for her son's sake. Her step is much more firm and elastic than Miss Ward's, and any one looking in their faces might be puzzled to know which was the elder of the two women; for sickness and

her brother's trouble have written deep lines in Margaret Ward's face.

Miss Ward has reveled in her sorrow, as she has much the weaker nature of the two, and instead of fighting her battle bravely has weakly succumbed, and it has shown its influence on her character. While Mrs. Livingston, who has suffered more keenly in the loss of her husband and daughter, has borne up nobly, instead of bowing under the stroke. With true Christian fortitude she has carried her cross firmly on her shoulders, so that its brightness has remained undimmed, while Miss Ward's cross has been dragged along so weakly and murmuringly that it has lost much of its glory in its journey. It has not been a graceful bowing under the yoke, but a strong fight of the rebellious spirit all through.

"Mrs. Livingston,"—Gertrude paused, hardly knowing how to commence her disagreeable subject, for she knew she would meet with opposition, "I am going to ill reward your kind care, and show very bad taste, by telling you I am afraid I shall have to shorten my visit by three or four days."

"What is the matter, Gertrude dear?" Mrs. Livingston appeared surprised.

"I think I should leave you on Miss Ward's account. I have been troubled about her ever since I saw her the other day; she appeared so harassed and worried, and not at all well."

"She has often told me she is never well in winter, and I think she is fanciful and encourages her ill health; so don't let it make you anxious on her account."

"I think you would have agreed with me if

you had seen her the other day; she appeared so entirely worn out, and I think that Miss Cecil troubles her."

"I don't wonder if she does, as I think she would be a disagreeable companion to any one; but I have no patience with Margaret, for she richly deserves the trouble; there was no reason in the world why she need have asked her. Margaret had an old scheme years ago of marrying her brother to Miss Cecil, and I am afraid she is silly enough to cherish it yet. Years ago, when they were both young, John paid her some foolish attentions, as any young man might do, and Margaret had an idea that she could bring about a match between them. She is very tenacious of any subject when she gets it firmly imbedded in her mind."

"I should think Miss Cecil would object to so openly siding with Miss Ward." Gertrude remarked, quite pleased that Miss Cecil at least had no chance of taking her place with the children, as she had taken a strange dislike to that lady.

"Not at all. Lucy Cecil is poor, and dependent on an uncle she does not care for. I have known her long enough to understand she would do anything almost to obtain an independent home. I could wish poor John no worse fate than to have her for his wife, as she could not make any man's life happy. He has had a severe enough experience already to make a happier life doubly necessary in his case."

"Mr. Ward, I should think, was a cold, proud man, little dependent on others for happiness." And though Gertrude so firmly asserted her opinion, she was very glad of the contradiction.

"You little know him, Gertrude. If you could

only remember him as Ralph and I do. Ralph, come here and talk to Gertrude." She threw up the window and called him in. "Gertrude is going to leave us to-morrow. Don't you think she is treating us very shabbily? I am afraid you have not made yourself agreeable." Mrs. Livingston looked proudly at him as she laid her hand on his shoulder, perfectly certain that no one could withstand him. She too had her pet scheme, like Miss Ward; but the most important actors in the scene appeared to understand their parts badly.

"Not thinking of leaving us, Gertrude?" Ralph spoke reproachfully.

"I do not want to go, Ralph." The fib fell easily and unconsciously from her tongue, as she thought it was a great pity she could not have all her friends together. "You must not, either of you, think I have not appreciated your kindness, and enjoyed every moment of my stay, for it would not be true. Miss Ward was very kind to let me come to you, and I think I should return now. Did not you think she looked very badly the other day?"

"That is a fact, Gertrude." The young man paused musingly. "Mother, I never saw any one so changed as Miss Ward this last year: she is looking very old."

"I know, Ralph—I have noticed it myself. Poor Margaret has one of those unfortunate temperaments that delight in making trouble if it does not come naturally, and she is sadly worn for her years. I am so provoked with her for reviving that silly scheme about Lucy Cecil that I cannot feel for her as I otherwise would. I am

afraid she will never be convinced of her utter unworthiness. But about Gertrude, Ralph?"

"Gertrude knows best, mother; and you really talk as though your parting was for a long time. Now that she is such a good horsewoman, she will be riding over almost every day." Ralph was quite pleased, when Gertrude smiled gratefully in being relieved from her difficulty without appearing unkind to her hostess.

The last evening passed away pleasantly in music and conversation; and as Mrs. Livingston held Gertrude in a warm embrace on wishing her good night, she longed to keep her with her always, and hoped that her pet scheme would meet with better success than her friend Margaret Ward's had done.

Gertrude felt quite sad the next morning when she rode through the gate with Ralph, and looked back for Mrs. Livingston's answering smile. She had renewed her promise of coming to see her very soon again; and as there was only three miles that divided them they would see each other often, for Gertrude thought nothing of that distance either in a ride or walk. The ride home she enjoyed thoroughly, and was quite pleased with the idea of surprising the children.

Mr. Ward was the first to welcome her, for he was walking in front of the house enjoying his cigar as they rode up. He was too quick for Ralph; and without appearing rude, lifted her from the saddle. He thought it strange Ralph let him have that honor without trying to gain it himself.

"I am so glad to see you, Miss Lyle. I was just wondering what I should do with Margaret, and you have solved a difficult problem for me.

Margaret has been far from well, and the duty of entertaining Miss Cecil is decidedly too much for her. I am afraid you will think I am very selfish." Kind and courteous, Mr. Ward helped her with her habit so that she could walk more comfortably. "Come in, Ralph; I have not seen you for a long time; it is quite a treat."

"You look rather worn yourself, John. I am afraid Miss Cecil has been too much for you too." And laughing and talking, the two friends made their way to Mr. Ward's study, while Gertrude ran lightly up-stairs, wishing to find Rosa and Vannino, and change her dress for one more suitable.

"It was hard work parting with Gertrude; that girl is a pearl of priceless value. Mother looks at least two years younger since she has had her with her; she was loth to part with her, and I had to use my influence, or she would not be with you now. Why don't you thank me, you surly fellow? You don't value her half highly enough."

"I think you value her highly enough for both." Mr. Ward tried to smile.

"Of course I do. But the admiration is all on one side; so we have settled down to be brother and sister, as we can't be anything more."

"What do you mean, Ralph?"

"Simply this. I asked Gertrude to have me for better or worse, and she wouldn't do it." Ralph's face saddened in contradiction to his joking tone, showing the wound was not yet healed.

"Ralph, are you in earnest, or jesting?"

"Serious, old fellow. I can assure you it was no joking matter. She treated me as no other

woman would, and I would rather have her love as a sister, though it is but a cold feeling, than quantities of professions from any other woman I know. I don't intend to act a dog-in-the-manger's part; so, if I cannot have the prize it is no reason you should not try your luck." The bright, laughing Ralph was quite moved. "I care for you next to my mother, John; so woo and win her: you have my best wishes." Ralph wrung his hand warmly, and then said he must go and hunt up Miss Ward and get his usual scolding. Then he must find his little sweet-heart, that young lady being of rather an exacting disposition.

Gertrude did not love Ralph! The thought sent a new flood of hope to his heart. A Livingston propose to his governess and be refused! His respect for her was very genuine when he contrasted her conduct with the little game Miss Cecil had carried on for the last few days. The evenings in the parlor were looked forward to with pleasure now, as everything had changed since Gertrude's return. Ralph was a dear, good, noble fellow,—how much he had wronged him! Full of happy thoughts, the time passed swiftly away until evening, as Gertrude was much too busy to be visible before that time.

Miss Ward was very happy too, feeling as though a weight were lifted from her shoulders. She welcomed Gertrude warmly, and was glad to see Ralph and hear his praises of her, and the comfort she had been to his mother. The word governess was forgotten; and she did hope Ralph and Gertrude, as she was occasionally beginning to call her, would be happy. It was an unselfish wish; for she knew how dismal the

days would be without her, as she had already proved, notwithstanding dear Lucy's presence. Dear Lucy could not fill Gertrude's place, and although she made many fervent wishes for her happiness, she would have been glad if Ralph could have found another person who would have done equally as well. Miss Ward was beginning to think there was but one Miss Lyle; and she did not know what would become of the children and herself if Gertrude married Ralph.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"I AM to stay up till nine o'clock, because Miss Lyle is home, and I am to stay here too." Fully conscious of the honor of spending an evening in the parlor, Rosa drew her brother down on the large seat by her.

"I think little boys and girls should go to bed early," said Miss Cecil.

"It makes no difference." And Rosa sat swinging her feet, not heeding Gertrude's reproving look. "It makes no difference. Papa said I might."

"Rosa! Rosa! That is not pretty," Gertrude remonstrated.

"I don't care." Seeing Gertrude's disapproving look, she got down from her seat and whispered in her ear, "I can't, for I hate——"

Gertrude was sorry her disapproval was not more seriously worded, and sorry too that she entered into the child's feelings, as she felt more like encouraging Rosa than holding her back. With a child's quick perception Rosa saw that Miss Lyle was not much displeased; so she ran back to her seat perfectly satisfied, and fully intent on enjoying her evening in the parlor, and playing the lady, as Ann had told her.

Mr. Ward, sitting by the table reading, had fallen into his old habit of looking up from his paper. He was enjoying the little scene, and

Rosa's part in it, as his pleased smile fully showed, while he looked at the paper again steadily.

Meanwhile Vannino had crept to his old place in Gertrude's lap, tired of playing at dignity with Rosa; while Gertrude was crooning over nursery rhymes for his amusement, in a low tone, so as not to disturb the others.

"Miss Lyle,"—and Miss Cecil, who was determined to show the governess her place, or, as Ralph expressed it, was taking airs on herself, interrupted Gertrude, much to Vannino's disgust,—"I think you ruin that child by such constant petting; he will never be a man."

"It makes no difference," the sleepy little monkey repeated, imitating his sister. Gertrude bit her lip to check the smile that would come, and Mr. Ward laughed aloud at the nonsense he was reading, while he stared steadily at the deaths in the paper. Mr. Ward must be either a vampire or a ghoul, for he sat chuckling over the long list of names; every now and then breaking into a fresh outburst of mirth, much to Ralph's surprise.

When, however, he had explained to Ralph, he laughed quite as loudly too, making Miss Ward raise her glasses; and filling her with a dim idea of something horrible in such uproarious laughter over such a subject. Meanwhile, Gertrude, biting her lip, and trying to control the muscles of her face, did her best to answer Miss Cecil.

"I think it is better to err in affection than in coldness with children; but I did not know you had any idea of being a governess, and wanted a lesson in that art." She could not help saying it, as she thought Miss Cecil impertinent in meddling with what did not concern her."

"Biting." Mr. Ward and Ralph laughed again, as Ralph murmured in his ears, "Which do you side with, John? Miss Cecil had better look to her weapons before she attacks Miss Lyle, or Gertrude will not leave her an inch of standing room. What say you?" But Mr. Ward only laughed more loudly, as he called Rosa to him and kissed her,—certainly a strange way of rewarding the child's impertinence.

Miss Cecil, routed on the field, instead of wisely retiring while her ranks were only yet shaken, drew up her forces for another attack.

"Do you like poetry, Miss Lyle?"

"Who does not, Miss Cecil?" Gertrude raised her glowing, eager face.

"Tennyson?"

"Yes; Tennyson has written poems that will live forever, and the moments they were written in are worth years so spent."

"What do you like, Miss Lyle?" Mr. Ward, interested in the discussion, asked Gertrude the question, much to Miss Cecil's disgust, who wondered at his bad taste in thinking it worth while to talk to the governess.

"The Charge of the Light Brigade,' and—

"Break, break, break,
At the foot of thy crags, O sea!
But the tender grace of a day that is dead
Will never come back to me,"

Gertrude murmured to herself.

"You are an enthusiast, Miss Lyle." Miss Cecil's lip curled scornfully.

"Who is not, in poetry's cause?" The genuine feeling in her eyes put to the blush the sham thing as represented by Miss Cecil. "Some-

times a verse, or even a line of a poet I love will ring in my ears for hours. Over and over again I will repeat it. May be I have only read it once; but there it is. I can go over the whole poem in my mind and never forget its beauties; from that one reading I can often make out whole verses without an effort, its beauties are so deeply written on both my heart and mind. Sometimes when I am awake at night I sing over my songs, and am nearer God at those moments than at any other." Gertrude raised her eyes full of tears to Mr. Ward's face, sure of sympathy, for he, too, was beginning to love poetry, and everything that was dear to her.

"Poetry, like music, is a gift direct from heaven, and bearing all heaven's loveliness with it. To some people, poetry is poetry; anything that rhymes will do equally well. Just on the same principle that a hand-organ is a hand-organ, though some are full of harmony and others nothing but discord." Gertrude could not help smiling, while afraid Ralph and Mr. Ward would think her very ill natured.

"I agree with you perfectly, Miss Lyle." Mr. Ward looked meaningly at Ralph.

"Some people think poetry pretty and nice," as they say; if they could only for one moment feel as I feel! It is worth the work of ages to move and comfort some hearts as it does. Do you remember what Longfellow says? It is the poet's glorious work—

The departing leave behind them footprints on the sands of time.

And there they remain always glorious and beautiful, never to be eradicated or defaced. Is not

such a work truly glorious?" Gertrude, ashamed of being so moved, bent over the child's wondering face and kissed him.

"Do you like Maud, Miss Lyle?" Miss Cecil, not to be surpassed, opened her book for a quotation.

"I kiss'd her slender hand;
She took the kiss sedately;
Maud is not seventeen,
But she is tall and stately.

Look! a horse is at the door,
And little King Charles is snarling;
Go back, my lord, across the moor,
You are not her darling."

"High diddle, diddle, the cat's in the fiddle,
The cow jumped over the moon;
The little dog laughed to see such a sport,
And the dish ran away with the spoon,"

Gertrude crooned slowly to Vannino, while the mischief sparkled in her eyes. Ralph and Mr. Ward could not help laughing, quite forgetting what was due to Miss Cecil.

"I thought you liked Tennyson?" Miss Cecil was far from amiable, for who could be under the same circumstances?

"I do, Miss Cecil; but you have selected the weakest part of his works for your perusal. Tennyson would never have been listened to if he had not taught us what he could do before he wrote that unfortunate poem."

Gertrude laughed again, as she remembered Miss Cecil's well-satisfied face while reading. "Poor Maud has been much abused; and it is a great pity what you have just read could not be crossed out of people's minds. 'Come into the garden, Maud,' is perfect. Each separate

verse is a poem. It is a misfortune he could not have left her alone except in that one song."

But again Miss Cecil, not to be outdone, took up her book, for she could not quote from memory.

"Lord Ronald courted Lady Clare,
I trow they did not part in scorn!
Lord Ronald, her cousin, courted her,
And they wed the morrow morn."

Gertrude could not resist the temptation of quoting, for Vannino's benefit—

"There was an old lady all skin and bone,
Such an old lady as never was known;
This lady went to church, one day,
All on purpose for to pray."

Ralph and Mr. Ward found it hard to keep their faces straight, on seeing the likeness between the two verses.

"Don't you like that, Miss Lyle?" Miss Cecil was trying her best to be amiable.

"Pretty well. It is an imitation of an old ballad, and they say very good; but it never interested me. I don't care simply for rhyme, but I like poetry with a soul. The nursery rhyme I was repeating for little Vannino has quite as interesting a story. The subject is death." The mischief sparkled in Gertrude's eyes.

"I did not pay any attention. I am not versed in nursery rhymes." Miss Cecil was thoroughly disgusted. She had tried riding her pet hobby, and had been thrown from her saddle ignominiously.

CHAPTER XIX.

"MAY papa have some tea, Miss Lyle?" Rosa, who had heard her father's voice in the entry, ran out and was pulling him in by the hand.

"Miss Lyle makes the nicest tea; she gives such loads of sugar, and it is so good. Do, please, Miss Lyle, let papa come just this evening. We will be so good."

"Do, please, Miss Lyle," Mr. Ward added, "I will be so good." He sat down on a chair, meekly crossing his hands, while Rosa playfully tied her apron round his neck so that he should not soil his clothes.

"May I, please, ma'am?" He looked laughingly into her blushing face.

"I think if you are very good and do not give any trouble, you may."

"We have as much sugar as we please, but then we eat very little butter, as it is bad for the complexion."

"You don't say so, Rosa! is that really true?" Her father tried to look serious in answer to her eager glance. "Is that so, Miss Lyle?"

"Perfectly true, sir."

"And then we eat all the crusts, for you know that makes one's hair curl." Rosa looked at her jetty ringlets approvingly.

"That will be something for me to remember. How many crusts does it take—many?"

"Oh, that depends on——" and she looked at Gertrude for assistance.

"How hungry you are," Gertrude added.

"Papa!" As he played negligently with his knife and fork. "Don't do that, Miss Lyle won't like it; she never lets Vannino and I. You might cut yourself, you know."

"That is true, Rosa." He sighed regretfully, as the child in her earnestness pushed the knife and fork far away from him, and looked at Gertrude for approval.

"But how do you eat without a knife?"

"There is no use."

"Why, Rosa?"

"Miss Lyle cuts the bread and butter herself, and it is so good."

"It must be, Rosa." Mr. Ward watched the young girl as she bent seriously over her task. "I am afraid Miss Lyle stands little chance herself; you must keep her very busy."

"Do we, Miss Lyle?" But Gertrude only shook her head, happy in the child's pleasure, and not caring to interrupt it. "We wait till she is all through—you know it would be rude to commence before. You are not very hungry, papa?" A new idea was suggested, and she raised her troubled eyes to his face.

"I am very hungry, Rosa."

"Can't you wait, papa?" The little one did not want to put her new pupil's patience to too severe a test.

"I am starving, Rosa."

"Oh dear! Papa, I am so sorry. But may be, Miss Lyle, just for papa this evening." She held out her plate pleadingly, while she shook her head as she looked at her brother, and said:

"Only for papa, Vannino; just this once for papa." But Vannino was too placidly watching the steam as it came out of the teapot to notice what was going on round him.

"Oh dear! Papa, don't eat so fast,"—as the last morsel was swallowed,—*"Miss Lyle won't like it."* She looked anxiously at Gertrude, who was to all appearance very busy with her task, but enjoying the little scene that was being played near her.

"I am so hungry, Rosa," he pleaded, "and it was so good. Don't you think I might have another?" Again the little pantomime was gone through with, and the last bit of the second slice was swallowed.

"Oh dear! you do eat so much, papa." Rosa, seeing the bread and butter was all cut ready, and that Gertrude was pouring out their tea for them, looked doubtfully at the small quantity and then at her father, whose appetite she dreaded as slice after slice disappeared. Slowly the little girl got down from her seat, and was soon by her brother's side as he sat by Miss Lyle. Evidently they were arguing some knotty point, and Vannino appeared to resist.

"You shall have my top, Vannino, and my pretty box." But the boy only shook his head, as he thrust his sister away and kept his seat. "For papa, Vannino!" Rosa's face was very earnest.

"I am so hungry," Vannino pleaded.

"For my beautiful puzzle, Vannino?" She was evidently making a great sacrifice.

"Yes!" The boy appeared satisfied as he was led away by his sister, Gertrude apparently not noticing the by-play.

"At least, now, papa will have plenty, and Miss Lyle, too." Satisfied with her work, though sorry to give up her puzzle, her favorite toy, Rosa did her best to amuse her brother.

Their father watched them, much interested and touched by the child's unselfishness, and he looked to Gertrude for sympathy. "She is a dear little thing, Miss Lyle! You have worked wonders with my children, and I can never thank you enough."

"It was a good soil to work on. Rosa's warm, generous heart was easily won, and I am more than fully repaid by their love."

"Rosa!" Her father called her to him as she was busy showing her brother the mysteries of her prized puzzle, her favorite plaything. "Come here, Rosa!" He raised her in his lap while he smoothed her jetty curls. "I am afraid my little girl is hungry." He kissed her upturned face, and held the small hands of the unselfish child, who had so willingly denied herself for his pleasure. "You are very hungry, Rosa."

"Oh no! not one bit!" She raised her head and looked in his eyes.

"But you must be, Rosa. I already feel a poor little hungry bone poking its way through, though you are so brave." He laid his hand on her shoulder.

"Where, papa?" Laughing, she shook her head. "Vannino and I had an orange just before tea, and we are not hungry; only we always eat Miss Lyle's bread and butter, for it is so good."

"And I ate it all up; that was too greedy, and bad. Was it not, Rosa?"

"No, papa! We get it every night, and you

don't." She looked lovingly at Gertrude; sure that nothing could be better than the bread and butter she prepared herself with her own hands, as she explained.

"Suppose I should come every night and eat it all up, what would you do?"

"I should be so glad. Do! do! Papa." She clasped her hands with delight. But suddenly remembering something,—that her brother, who had been bought off that evening could not always be so won. "But Vannino, you would leave a little bit for Vannino? He don't eat very much, papa."

"I will see about it." Again he laid his hand on her shoulder. "Rosa, this little hungry bone troubles me. What shall I do to make it better?"

"Oh, papa!" She appeared much amused as she felt the bone too. "It is always so."

"Always so hungry? Poor little bone! But, Rosa, it must be hungry now." Mr. Ward felt her shoulder seriously, while he looked in her laughing face.

"You did not like your fête the other day?"

"Yes indeed, papa! Was it not nice?"

"Suppose we have another."

"But when, papa? When?" And her eager little hands were clasped again.

"Now. Would you like to have it now?"

"Now — right off — to-night?" she eagerly gasped. Her eyes were dancing with excitement, as she jumped up and down, much to Vannino's surprise, who came slowly from his corner to hear the good news. "To-night! To-night! Just think, to-night, Vannino! But we have nothing; and it is so late."

"Let us see what Miss Lyle can do." Remembering a hamper of good things that had come down from New York that day, he determined to gratify her. Mr. Ward wrote a few directions on a slip of paper, and handed it to Gertrude.

"Who shall we have, Rosa? Aunt Margaret?"

"Then Miss Cecil will come." And her face fell.

"Would you like Uncle Ralph?" as the children had been taught to call him.

"Yes! yes! So much! But Miss Cecil."

"Never mind, Rosa. We won't let her know. Miss Lyle will call the fairies to her aid while Vannino and yourself go to Ann to have your dress changed." For Rosa had pleaded for her new dress.

"You won't have Miss Cecil? Are you very sure?" She held up her finger as a reminder when she left the room.

"Yes, very sure, darling; only Uncle Ralph." He closed the door after them, and soon was deep in consultation with Gertrude.

They could not do much in so short a time; but as children are easily satisfied, and both willing workers lent heart and hand to the task, it was soon accomplished.

The hamper from New York had been well stocked with bonbons and sweet things, and served to fill the table with what children most like. Fruit and flowers are always beautiful, and Gertrude knew the art of arranging them to perfection. Their labor was accomplished to their mutual satisfaction; and Mr. Ward, proud

and happy in their success, forgot the name of governess as attached to Miss Lyle. She had been good and true to his children; and in those few minutes they spent together, all barriers were broken down, and both workers were fully satisfied with each other.

CHAPTER XX.

"JAMES, has Mr. Livingston been here yet?" he asked the man on the way to his study.

"Yes, sir; he has been waiting some time in your room for you."

"Why, John; where have you been? I have read the paper through and through. I was beginning to think of taking up my hat and being off in high indignation."

"I did not know you were here, Ralph." He laid his hand on the young man's shoulder. "I have an invitation for you from a lady." Mr. Ward smiled pleasantly.

"What is that? You are a trump, John."

"You need not make such a row," as in his haste he knocked a large book off the table. "It is only from my little Rosa."

"My little ladylove? So much the better."

"The child has been very good lately, and I promised her a treat. You of course are to come; but she gave me particular directions not to bring Miss Cecil." Mr. Ward smiled again. "I think children's instincts are very correct, don't you?"

"And what about Gertrude?" Ralph smiled significantly.

"Miss Lyle is very well, thank you; she will answer for herself when you see her."

"James"—to the man—"I shall be very much occupied this evening, and can see no one. You understand."

"Perfectly, sir." The man closed and locked the door to bar it against intruders, for Miss Cecil had a way of finding herself in places where she did not belong, as the servants knew.

"Good evening, Gertrude. My little lady-love." And Ralph kissed both the children.

"I am so glad. But, papa, Miss Cecil is not coming,—you did not ask her?"

"I did not invite her, Rosa."

"But what did you do?" Always ready for excitement and mystery, Rosa looked at her father.

"I did not invite her."

"But she may come." She looked perplexed, and but half satisfied.

"I told James I would be very busy this evening, and could see no one. Will that do?"

"How very nice!" She clapped her hands in delight. "Miss Lyle was to be our fairy; has not she done beautifully with nothing?"

"With nothing, Rosa!"

"Yes; we had nothing at all. But Miss Lyle can do anything, Uncle Ralph." She raised her eyes confidently to Gertrude's face. Ralph and her father watched quite as admiringly the young girl's figure and sweet face as she moved about doing everything so easily and gracefully. Pleasantly and cheerfully the evening wore on for each member of the little party, who were pleased and interested in each other. Gertrude was full of life, and was looking her best, for her eyes sparkled, and the hair she had tried to smooth back so plainly on her first arrival, was let have its way, and waved and rippled in a mass of golden lights. So that you longed to put your hand on its glossy, thick folds.

The school-room was a large, cheerful room, fitted up with every comfort such a room could have; and since Miss Lyle had been with them, many things had been added to make it more pleasant. Mr. Ward was fond of open fires, and had one in every room in the house; so that the large logs on their brightly polished andirons were spluttering and hissing up the chimney, as the damp wood resisted for some moments the fierce pressure of flame. Round the table were a merry party, cracking nuts, and enjoying the good things with which it was so well laden. The children were pleading for a story from Gertrude, and Mr. Ward and Ralph were seconding them—as Gertrude blushing refused, remembering her former attempt at story-telling in Mr. Ward's presence. She did not feel as much at ease with him now, as when they had been on less peaceful terms, which her blushing face showed. He was then always ready for a war of words, and she cared so little for his opinion that she had fought her battle bravely. She might have told her story easily then, but now it was simply impossible, so she only laughingly shook her head.

"I love you so much, Miss Lyle; do tell us just one. You love Miss Lyle, too; don't you, Uncle Ralph?"

"Yes, indeed, Rosa!" not noticing Gertrude's blushing face as he tried to draw the child out.

"I know who *does* love Miss Lyle." Rosa shook her head roguishly.

"Who, Rosa?" Ralph questioned.

"Papa." Not knowing the mischief she was doing the child went on. "I tried his name with Miss Lyle's, as she taught me, and it said

he loved her. When I asked papa he did not say no." She raised her eyes to her father's face for encouragement, but he only frowned darkly.

Poor little Rosa could not tell that, although with a child's innocence and love she had softened her father's heart, she had in the same way sealed it. He was a proud man and felt thoroughly uncomfortable, while he styled his little daughter forward, and wondered what Miss Lyle, the governess, would think. He remembered her position plainly now. He had borne enough in his past life—the impertinent questioning of strangers, and the shame of an unequal marriage, and could not do the same again.

Meanwhile, Gertrude, blushing and uncomfortable, read in part her host's thoughts, and was the Gertrude he had first known. The retort would not come as glibly to her tongue, but she could show him how very little his opinion troubled her. She had forgotten the governess for a time, but she could easily take up her armor again and repair the broken links in her harness.

Rosa, seeing with a child's quick instinct that something was wrong, and wanting to remedy it, pressed closely up to Gertrude.

"Won't you tell us just one story, Miss Lyle? Only a short one."

The impulse was strong to show her utter scorn of his character, so in answer to Rosa's pleading, she commenced her story.

"Two sprites sat on a river bank, and threw up the water till it fell in a crystal spray around them. They laughed merrily as they looked at it through the sun, and saw the many bright diamonds as they glittered where they fell. One

was a wicked sprite, and one a good; and good wishes fell from the hand of the one, and wicked from the other. Two little children on the bank sat and watched them, catching the spray as it fell in their faces, and laughing merrily, too, in echo. The children grew to manhood—one laden with charity, confidence, and love——"

"Like Uncle Ralph?" Rosa interrupted.

"Yes, like Uncle Ralph." Gertrude went on with her story. "The other carried pride, a cold heart, and suspicion of all. The first went on his way; and flowers of goodness and sweetness blossomed in his path; and he only saw good, though he sorrowed like other men. The other shut himself in his shell of selfishness, and lived and fed on his pride; and all his works were evil, for they lacked the most perfect attribute of all—charity, love, and confidence. Years passed on, and the last day came; two angels stood at the door of paradise with flaming swords. One had eternity and paradise written on his breast, the other death and oblivion. The first held out his hand to the first man, the other to the last. One entered into the realm of perfect beauty, the other died as the brute, for he had no soul."

"It is so short, Miss Lyle." Rosa, not liking the story which she did not understand, pleaded for another.

"No, Rosa, it is too late." Gertrude rose from the table, both the children following her, while the two gentlemen bade them good night.

"I think that girl is the most perfect woman I have ever met," said Ralph, heartily.

"Miss Lyle is well enough, Ralph, but she is vain." Mr. Ward strode up and down his study with his hands behind his back, displeased with

little Rosa, Ralph, and Gertrude, but most of all with himself. "What a born idiot I have been!" he murmured; "it is well I wakened up in time."

"Gertrude Lyle is a noble girl, and any one who could gain her love is truly to be envied." Ralph watched his friend, wondering at his discomfiture.

"Ralph, you are such an enthusiast, you must not expect to find others as enthusiastic as yourself. Miss Lyle is well enough, but she is Gertrude Lyle, my governess, for all that, and so, not to be thought of." Mr. Ward was talking to hear himself contradicted, for he knew all he said was false, and not worthy of him, but he was a proud man, and could veil his feelings from others.

"I don't believe you have any more heart than a fish; you provoke me out of all patience. How can you live in the same house with Gertrude Lyle and not be madly in love with her? It is more than I can fathom, and I would not have your cold heart for worlds. Don't you know, man—or are you willfully blind—that it is the person that degrades the position, and not the position the person? A perfect, high-souled woman or man only renders more noble all that they touch. Gertrude Lyle might sweep the streets with grace and dignity, and make it a worthy profession, so that all would honor her, though unfortunately such souls are too often weighed with spurious coin. A perfect woman—God's noblest, best gift to man—carries all of truth and purity to be found in this sinful world, and is to be held precious above all things. Do not lose faith in all because one woman proved false, and do not steel your heart with pride; it is doubting God's providence."

"Heigh-ho! Ralph, old fellow, do not let us quarrel about nothing. You do not like my style, neither does yours suit me; so we are both best pleased as it is." His lip curled unpleasantly.

"You make me sick at heart, John. I thought your old cynicism was buried, but here it is coming up again at the first opportunity. If you only knew how you were cheating yourself. I have it almost in my heart to wish that you loved Gertrude, and found too late you had lost her love through your own carelessness. If you would only be your true self, and not think so much of the world and what it would think, you would be a happier man. You may wrap yourself in your purple and fine linen, and keep your robes intact; but I would far rather have them soiled, and even torn to rags, than never see the light. If you decide all are deceitful, and none to be trusted, you will never understand the difference, as you have never known true worth."

"Hang it, Ralph!" Mr. Ward paused in his walk. "You are only wasting your breath; your rhapsodies are all lost on me. I can't stand your meddling any longer. Go your own way, and I will go mine, and not trouble you." But seeing how hurt Ralph appeared, he added: "I know you mean it for the best, old fellow, but you don't understand me, and never will. I am not a namby-pamby school-boy, to fall in love with a shadow. I am a hopeless case, and the sooner you give me up the better, as you cannot expect me to bear very patiently this meddling supervision."

"I shall not speak to you again, John." And hurt and out of patience, Ralph rose to go. "I did it out of pure friendship, and because I could

not tamely stand by and see you wrecking your whole life. You love that girl." Mr. Ward started. "You love her, and you have not the manhood to acknowledge it to yourself. I will not meddle again, as you say, but I cannot come to visit you any more, as it takes the heart out of me to see a man trifle as you are doing with the most precious thing in life, and which I would give my right hand for. My only hope is that Gertrude values you at your true worth." Ralph wrung his hand, while the tears stood in his eyes.

"Good-by! God bless you, Ralph!" Mr. Ward, moved, but not wishing to show it, restrained him when he would have gone. "Forgive me for my harsh words. I know you meant to do your duty by me, but you do not understand me. As to your ill wishes, I care so little for my life, it makes no difference, and I take all from you as I would from no other man, for I understand your motive. Good night! Come again as usual to-morrow, and we will forget all that has been unpleasant this evening."

"No, I thank you, Ward. My memory is not so short. I will come when you care to have me, and not sooner. At present, I would rather not be with you, as we do not suit each other." Taking up his hat, he left the room, and Mr. Ward settled himself in his chair for another meditation.

"That boy is crack-brained; but have I betrayed myself, and does that little witch up-stairs think the same as Ralph? No doubt she does. Women are all vain, but I will show her she is mistaken. How well she looked this evening when she told the story, and how well she

told it! The little witch has enough impudence to furnish a regiment, though I can't help admiring her for it. Poor little thing, it would be a pity now. But I am a fool to think that nonsense; no danger of her having any feeling; no doubt, as Ralph says, she estimates me at my true worth, and Ralph at his. That story was well told. She is making Rosa as pert as herself. I will have to see to it."

The melting mood was over, and Mr. Ward had awakened. He could not be the same cold man to his children as he had been, but he could harden his heart against their governess. May be his sister was wise. Lucy Cecil was as good as the general run of women, and if he must be fettered, he had better marry her, and let her be a companion for Margaret; he still had his books and his farm.

But for all, his thoughts would travel back to the visit Gertrude paid Mrs. Livingston. How had the plan suited, and was his sister happy? Though it was hard to acknowledge, Mr. Ward was just, and gave Gertrude her due, for he decided it was she, and not Lucy Cecil, who made his sister happy. And how about himself? He was not a school-boy to break his heart; and Ralph should see how little he knew him. So he reasoned on, and cheated himself, and was unhappy and ill at ease. All, as Ralph had said, because he loved Gertrude Lyle, the governess, and had not manhood enough to acknowledge it.

CHAPTER XXI.

"BROTHER dear." Miss Ward detained her brother the next morning as he was on his way to his study.

"What is it, Margaret?"

"I should like very much to talk to you."

"What is it, Margaret? Don't keep me here; I am in a great hurry." Out of humor with himself, he wanted to pass her and be alone.

"I will come into your study with you, dear." Fluttered by his manner, and forgetting all her nicely prepared little speech, Miss Ward wanted a breaking space to gain time, and call back her disordered ranks into line, before she commenced her attack, as she was determined to persevere.

"It is fearfully cold in the study, Margaret." Not wanting to have her with him, and hoping to discourage her, he paused to hear what she had to say, entirely forgetting the large wood-fire that had been kindled by his orders.

"Never mind, John dear—I would like very much to spend the morning with you." Feeling herself a martyr, as she had been nearly frozen in the study before, Miss Ward shuddered, but went steadily on her way, trusting to gain her crown of glory. She was certainly mortifying the flesh, for the benefit of the spirit.

"Well, come on then." It was said very un-

graciously, as going down the steps two at a time with immense strides, he was soon at the door of his study, while his poor little sister was panting and struggling to keep up with him.

"You are very impetuous, John dear," the poor little thing murmured, as she panted for breath. But seeing the wood-fire, and thinking by some invisible agency he had had it kindled for her, her spirits rose. She never for an instant imagined her idol indulged in an untruth, and Miss Ward was a person who never reasoned, but always jumped at conclusions in the most absurd manner, perfectly satisfied if the result were agreeable, and ready to think the best of every one.

"You are very kind, John dear," she faintly murmured as she perched herself on the edge of a chair, looking fearfully behind her at the columns of books with which it was laden. Her brother had pistols, and she could not tell in what corner they lay concealed ready to commit murder on the first person who came.

"I am very busy this morning, Margaret." He threw himself in his chair by the table. "Don't you think you could tell me what you have to say in ten minutes?" as he laid his watch before him. But seeing her flurried face, for she never could bear being brought suddenly to the point, he generously added: "Well, then, half an hour, Margaret; that is certainly enough." He leaned back in his chair and held up his watch, so that he could see every minute marked plainly as it passed away, and was one minute less before he should be released. He could not be exactly as he had been before; he could not lose his interest in his children, neither could he be careless about

his dress, as formerly. He was not happy, so would be cross naturally; it was a hard part he was acting, and he was but a bungler in the part he played. He was fighting against all his better instincts—for his pride—and as pride was very strong the battle promised to be long.

"How very comfortable your room looks, dear." His sister, wanting to be agreeable, but thinking quite the reverse, readily told an untruth to please him.

"Yes; it will do very well, Margaret."

"Is it not cold to-day, John dear? I think we will have snow, don't you?" She appeared much interested as she watched through the window the branches of the trees blowing as swayed by the wind, while her brother impatiently played a jig on the table with his first three fingers, then yawned, ran his hand through his hair, and sneezed.

"Yes; I think it is east, decidedly east." She crooned to herself, while she tried to look comfortable and easy.

"This is a very comfortable chair, John." Poor Miss Ward never thought how she was steeping her soul in falsehood, as one after another the fibs followed so trippingly, while she grew more nervous every moment. She saw that her brother was becoming more impatient, and decided that she must be very tiresome; John was busy, anything but that he could be wrong; that was too rank heresy to be tolerated an instant.

"I never feel as well when the wind is in the east. Do you, dear?" She looked timidly into his face; while the jig had changed into the lively air of the devil-among-the-tailors, and was now the most boisterous tattoo.

"Margaret." His closed lips were opened. "If you have come in to talk about the weather, and your aches and pains, could you not defer it?"

"That is not it, of course, dear."

"Then why in the world can't you tell me what you want?"

"Oh! oh!" She faintly struggled for the fitting words. "I am cold."

"Well, I told you so; do come to the point."

"Don't you think?"

"No, I never think," he interrupted. "Have we no new crockery? Has James stolen all the spoons? Is the house on fire?" His impatience had reached the climax, as one calamity after another was hurled at her devoted head.

"No, John dear; not nearly as bad. Only." Flurried and fluttered, she gasped out the word "Only."

"What? What?" His hand banged the table between each word.

"Only Lucy Cecil thinks——"

"The d—l she does! That's worth knowing. I never knew that before"—waiting impatiently for a conclusion.

"Dear Lucy thinks. Oh! I have such a pain in my side."

"Lucy Cecil thinks you have a pain in your side! Pleasant and lucid you are, Margaret! I am glad Miss Cecil is so sympathizing. She is a lovely girl!"—ironically.

"Oh, John dear! I knew you would come to think so at last." Her face brightened immeasurably. "I am so glad, brother."

"Glad of what, Margaret? You have only fifteen minutes left to torment me in; so make haste."

"Oh, John, John!" And her handkerchief was in requisition. "I thought you were a changed man through dear Lucy's influence."

"Did you? Well, you see you are mistaken."

"Oh, I hoped, John! Dear Lucy thinks that Miss Lyle is a very nice young person."

"Very kind of Miss Cecil, I am sure."

"Yes; dear Lucy was always kind-hearted. You know we all think Miss Lyle is very nice; but then you know she is the governess."

"Well that is an astonishing conclusion for Miss Cecil and yourself to arrive at. How long did it take to settle that fact?" But Miss Ward, who had at last succeeded in thawing her tongue, was not to be turned from her purpose.

"She is a dear, good girl. But spoiled, spoiled. Poor little thing, may be she can't help it." Aunt Margaret's heart melted when she thought of Gertrude; but swayed by every one she came in contact with, her thoughts were on a new track now.

"Dear Lucy thinks she is good—and all that. Pretty," she added doubtfully—"but then Ralph and yourself are—you particularly——"

"I particularly what?"

"Think too much. In fact, might in time——"

"Fall in love with Miss Lyle, you mean?" And he set his teeth tightly over his under lip.—
"Thunder! Mercury!! Mars!!! Jupiter!!!! Heaven and Earth! Margaret, how in the world did Miss Cecil and yourself come to such a precious conclusion? I give you the palm of merit. But tell dear Lucy to keep her nose quite out of my business, and poke it in other people's if she chooses."

Mr. Ward, in his excitement, was quite for-

getting to be elegant; stung and angry that Ralph, Margaret, and Miss Cecil all read his weakness.

While poor Miss Ward, entirely overcome, sat and wept in her handkerchief. Then the man, ashamed of himself, and pitying his poor little sister, laid his hand on her shoulder.

"I have been unkind, Margaret; but you sadly forget I am a Ward, and you try me."

"I am getting old, John dear, and very silly." She sobbed again.

"But, dear Lucy——"

"Yes, I understand; Miss Cecil is interested, and you are easily led."

"She likes you so much, John dear."

"I have no doubt, Margaret." And he smiled grimly. "But tell her to mind her own business."

"John, I couldn't do that. Poor Lucy has so little pleasure, and——"

"Takes pleasure in back-biting."

"If you would only occasionally, dear, let me finish my sentences."

"What shall I do, Margaret, to make up? I want to be a good boy very much, but I can't." And he drew his sister from the chair in which she was sitting, and put her in his arm-chair, which was much the most comfortable. Then, throwing himself on the floor, he laid his head on her lap, as he had done so many years ago when he had come to his sister for comfort from some piece of boyish mischief or folly. Moved and happy, his sister ran her hand through the thickly-tangled masses of hair on which she pressed her lips. Her baby brother, her darling boy, to be petted and caressed, as she had always

done, entirely forgetting the six feet of humanity, and the heavy moustache that decorated her baby brother's upper lip.

"Gertrude is a dear girl; and if, John——"

"If I am going to be a fool, Margaret." And again the dark frown came only too readily. "I am not; understand me, Margaret, and be satisfied. Sink all the women under the heaven, but my good, little, tormenting sister." He put his cheek caressingly against the hand that was smoothing the rough masses of hair.

Gertrude had at least accomplished so much good; she had brought the brother and sister together, and had taught the children to love their father.

"I have had a hard life, Margaret, and we can battle it out best alone. I am best satisfied as it is." It was anything but a satisfied face he raised to his sister. "But what can I do for you, Margaret?"

"I would like——" She paused. "I don't know what you will think, John. I would like—but I hardly know how to ask."

"What?" He looked at her encouragingly. "What?"

"A party."

"A party! Am I dreaming, Margaret?" And Mr. Ward perfectly shouted with laughter. "Run a pin into me, so I shall know I am awake. Are you going to commence dancing?"

"Brother!" Distressed, and troubled, afraid he would think her foolish, she interrupted—"Dear Lucy has had such a quiet time, and she likes parties."

"She fights her battles over your poor little shoulders; she must be a brave woman, truly."

"You wrong her, brother; it is not that."

"You want it, Margaret; that is enough for me, at least."

"You know we needn't have many," she added apologetically,—*"and Miss Lyle."*

"Yes, we shall. I feel quite like dancing. Miss Lyle shall come, and every one we know." Happy in seeing her pleased face, and feeling that he was doing a kind action, Mr. Ward hurried on.

"What will you wear, Margaret? and will you keep your first dance for me?" Not feeling comfortable himself, and wishing by excitement to work off his trouble, he started to his feet. "When shall it be,—to-day is Monday?"

"Monday is wash-day."

"And Tuesday?"

"Ironing."

"And Wednesday, what happens?"

"Nothing in particular, dear."

"Well, then, let it be Wednesday. Say Wednesday week."

"Too soon, John?"

"No; the sooner the better. Now for note paper, and invitations."

Mr. Ward took the first opportunity to tell Gertrude, when he met her, that they were to have a ball Wednesday week. People coming from New York—and so on. That the house would be full that night, and any silks and laces she wanted he could easily get for her. So that Gertrude, who felt sorry for their misunderstanding, and intended not to come to the party, as Miss Ward had only asked her out of politeness, determined she would go and wear her pink silk, and be as gay and pretty as she could, and take all the attention from Miss Cecil if it were possible.

CHAPTER XXII.

"I do wonder if that man is foolish enough to think I am in love with him; men are so vain, it would just be on a par with his vanity! There is something noble about him, and I am sorry for him; he has had such a hard life, no doubt he distrusts all women. I should like to please Miss Ward by not going down; if it were not for that Miss Cecil, I would; but I know how she would triumph over me, and I cannot stand that. I should not care if Mr. Ward were unhappy; but I love Rosa and Vanning dearly, and I can't bear that she should be their mother; they would not be at all happy, poor little things." Her eyes filled with tears when she thought of them. "I know Miss Cecil would be delighted to have me as their governess; but I should not stay—I could not bear it." Her eyes filled again. "If Mr. Ward were only more like Ralph, and not so changeable,"—and she thought of and admired Ralph's sunny temperament, though she knew Mr. Ward's stormy one interested her much the more of the two,—“his face softens and brightens so when he smiles; but that is so seldom.” She sighed again. “He is nearly always like a thunder-cloud. I do wonder if he can be in love with that Miss Cecil?” Her lip curled. “He must be very easily pleased. I don't see how Miss Ward can be so devoted to

her, either. If I only dared to tell my secret, but I can't." She shook her head sadly. "This world is the strangest world I ever was in!" Gertrude, who had had no experience of another, did not pause to think she could not be an impartial judge.

"My black silk looks so plain; I suppose it is what I should wear—but I would rather not go at all than that way. Miss Cecil will be dressed to death; I should like so much to surprise them, and make her angry." Gertrude went to her trunk, which she opened slowly, as if half ashamed of herself, and lifted up one corner of the large wrapping-paper that concealed her foolish purchase. It was a lovely color, and she pulled out one little end to look at it. If she only could. Mr. Ward had noticed her old bonnet, and she would like to show him how differently she could look. It was a great temptation; but, at any rate, it would do no harm to look at it. Feeling very much like a thief detected in his crime, she ran to her door and locked it, and then the precious burden was lifted out. It was a shaded pink silk, then the newest style—the three shades: the very pale, then deeper, and then the dark-rose pink. The flounces were arranged in rows, looped up with rosettes of the deepest shade, and Madame L'Estrange had certainly made a brilliant success. The waist was trimmed with a deep bertha, edged with fine old lace, and every place that the dainty cobweb could be put it was displayed in full beauty. It was a dress such as any woman would covet, and Gertrude's eyes sparkled and her cheeks glowed as she looked at the dainty little pink satin slippers, with their rosettes to correspond, and the tinted heels,

evidently just made for dancing. Then the pink lace-edged fan had been supplied as ordered by Mam'selle; even the gloves, with their embroidery to match, as only a Frenchwoman, with her exquisite taste, could do; it was perfect delight just to look at them. "Shall I or shall I not? If I only dared. It would be so nice to see them open their eyes—I will."

Strains of music came swelling up from below, and she must decide; so, carried away by the music and excitement, and thinking only of Miss Cecil's dissatisfaction, she no longer paused. Her hair had been arranged before, and she smiled brightly as she uncovered her firm white neck and shoulders; she tried on the perfectly fitting slipper. It was beautiful! She clasped her hands eagerly, and could not resist taking a few steps as the music pealed up from below. Just the thing for dancing, and she was delighted when she thought how uncomfortable Miss Cecil would be.

But she could not wait; she was longing to go, as she again heard the music. The dress was thrown over her shoulders, and then she paused, perplexed. What would she do? The dress was laced up behind, and she could not fasten it; she felt like crying with vexation. She did not want the servants to know, but she must. So, lightly throwing a shawl over her shoulders, and afraid of meeting some one, she ran to the nursery—quite regardless of her slippers, she almost tumbled down the stairs, tripping over the carpet in her haste.

"Ann, you must help me." She took off the shawl in which she had enveloped herself, and stood in all her splendor.

"Oh, how beautiful!" Rosa's little naked feet were on the carpet, while Vannino stared with wide-opened eyes. "You are an angel, Miss Lyle."

"Not quite, Rosa." Gertrude laughed nervously; even little Rosa's approval was pleasant, as the child, delighted, looked at her on all sides, afraid to go near the beautiful dress for fear of spoiling it.

"Go back to bed, Rosa, or you will get cold."

"Will you come and kiss me there, Miss Lyle, if I do?"

"Yes, darling." The two bright-eyed excited children watched, while poor Ann, overwhelmed with the honor, clumsily laced the dress. At last it was finished to their satisfaction, and Gertrude hurriedly kissed the children.

"Please, Miss Lyle, when you are all fixed, won't you come once more? Just once more?" Rosa pleaded.

"If you will go to sleep directly after, I will."

"Yes! yes!" was eagerly promised by both the children.

Then back in her own room, Gertrude looked, and laughed at the lovely face that smiled so brightly from the glass. The bouquet of pink rosebuds was put in her hair, and then she paused to think. She had put her foot into deep water, and what mattered an inch more or less? She was too much excited to be prudent, so a small box was brought out from its hiding-place and unlocked. Down on their fleecy bed were diamonds of a rare value, set in a quaint old style not then in vogue. The stones were large, of the purest water, and sparkled most brilliantly; the breastpin and earrings were put on, and then her

wrists were circled with gems. The pure white neck received the splendid *riviere*, and the glass reflected back the brilliancy as the fair owner of the jewels looked admiringly at them.

It was too much for the sweet young face, and did not become it; so the circlet of large diamonds was slipped off her neck and twined round her dimpled arm. She did not care for wearing all the set, but she remembered Miss Cecil, who she knew had no diamonds, so she *would*. Clasp and locking her little cabinet, she put it back safely in its hiding-place, and stood looking at her own reflection. Her cheeks were glowing with excitement, and her eyes, brilliant as the diamonds so lavishly displayed, laughed back into her own from the mirror. Then the perfectly-fitting glove was buttoned, and Gertrude stood radiantly beautiful in her elegant dress, so little suited to the governess. But she must not keep the children waiting; so, taking one more look, she gathered up her fan and handkerchief, and hastened away.

"Oh, Miss Lyle, how very beautiful! You are a fairy." Gertrude bent and kissed them both.

"Go to sleep, darlings." Breathless and excited, almost frightened at what she was doing, she hurried away. Doubting and hesitating, she stood embarrassed, not knowing what to do. She could not go down among all those people—she never could go in alone. But just at that moment she saw Ralph and his mother, who were trying to make their way through the crowded hall.

"Ralph!" she eagerly called, and the young

man looked up. "Wait just one minute." She ran lightly down the stairs.

"Where did you——" Mrs. Livingston paused, looking at her dress, and then thought Miss Ward's kind heart had prompted the present. "But, Gertrude,"—she put her hand on her arm, while a troubled look came into her face,—"I think I remember! Where did you get your jewels, dear? Gertrude, trust me, won't you? I ought to know!" She looked at her richly jeweled arm. "My memory is not as good now as it was. Trust me, dear!"

"Mrs. Livingston, you will know all soon, I hope." Her full red lips were pressed on those of her friend. "Try and trust me, for I cannot tell you." And vexed and sorry that she had put on her jewels, she stood hesitating, almost thinking of going back to her room. "I am sorry, Mrs. Livingston. I wish——"

"Don't, Gertrude!" said Ralph, laughing. "Don't wish for anything more! You will be Queen of Beauty, I see, this evening, and win hearts from all. I am very proud of my adopted sister. Here is one thing more, to complete the whole." A bouquet of perfectly arranged hot-house flowers was placed in her hand. "Don't look so serious! Mother has not been in society for years, and only came this evening to please Miss Ward. These gay dresses and jewels are too much for her sober eyes—that is all."

"Oh, thank you, Ralph! How very kind you are!" The beautiful bouquet was raised to her face. "They are perfect. Thank you so very much!" And, excited and forgetting her trouble in the gay sights and sounds, Gertrude's face was

beaming, as she walked along with her hand on Ralph's arm. Mrs. Livingston's face was smiling too, in return, as she turned to her for sympathy. There was something strange, but Mrs. Livingston could not resist her, and was willing to trust the fair young face and earnest eyes that looked at her so winningly.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"Who can she be? What a perfect face! How very lovely!" was the chorus on all sides, as Gertrude made her way through the gayly dressed company to Miss Ward's side.

"I have brought you a stranger, Miss Ward!" Ralph laughed gayly, enjoying in anticipation Miss Cecil's chagrin as he led the blushing girl forward; while Miss Ward, surprised and hardly knowing what to say, but fully realizing the loveliness of the face raised to her own, could not help kissing her, though the next moment she looked to see if her brother were near. (Miss Ward evidently did not understand the etiquette of the ball-room, and was making Gertrude more conspicuous than she would have wished if she had realized what she was doing.)

"She would make a lovely wife for Ralph,—may be steady him!" Miss Ward soliloquized. She watched Ralph with a kind, friendly face, as he talked so earnestly to Gertrude, putting his name down many times on her card. She would miss her very much, and she was very sorry on the children's account; and a tear came into her eyes as she thought she was but a silly old woman, and could not expect to be of much importance any longer.

"You dance, of course, Gertrude?"

"I used to, Ralph."

"That means you can and will. Can you resist that waltz? Come!" as one of Strauss's most maddening strains echoed through the room; and the next moment Ralph and Gertrude were whirling away, entering fully into the spirit of the dance.

"How lovely! Who can she be?" as the two light, graceful figures went floating by, their step so well timed, and every motion in unison.

"Not tired, Gertrude?"

"Oh no! It is perfect, Ralph." And the two danced on, not noticing how the dancers were pausing, and how all eyes were directed to them.

"Ward, who is that lovely girl?" A gentleman laid his hand on his host's arm, who, tired of the gay scene, and more tired still of Miss Cecil, who held his arm, had just come in from the conservatory. "Excuse me, Miss Cecil! I must know who that lady is." All three paused to look.

"Can it be? Yes it is! How well she looks!" Mr. Ward, with a man's vague idea of dress, was dazzled by the girl's great beauty, and looked only at the lovely face, and not at the dress that attracted Miss Cecil's attention. "That is Miss Lyle."

"Miss Lyle!" Miss Cecil raised her meaningless light-blue eyes. "You must be mistaken, Mr. Ward. Miss Lyle would not dare——"

"Miss Lyle is a perfect lady, Miss Cecil." His face expressed his disapproval, so Miss Cecil, feeling uncomfortable, and seeing she had made a mistake, tried to change the subject. The gentleman persisting, Mr. Ward explained: "Miss Lyle is my governess. I cannot introduce you, as I do not know her pleasure."

"Your governess! Well, she is the most charming specimen of the kind I have ever met." Turning away, he muttered: "Ward may try to keep her to himself as much as he pleases, but I shall know her, and dance with her too, before the evening is over." Soon after the same gentleman was talking and laughing with Ralph and Gertrude, as he filled up more places on her card. Pleased and happy, she saw the little card fast filling up, as one after another of Ralph's friends were made known to her. Mr. Ward was paying devoted attention to Miss Cecil, and Gertrude, knowing that lady was not her friend, felt troubled, and longed for one pleasant word from him. She did not observe him look at her at all, and she wondered if he were displeased; and the otherwise pleasant evening was marred by the fancied disapproval of her boorish host.

She did not see the eyes that followed her so eagerly when her own were otherwise engaged, and the genuine admiration that was expressed in them. Neither did she see that Miss Cecil, fretted by the inattention of her host, watched her jealously too. Envy the beautiful dress and jewels, but most of all her fair young face, Miss Cecil was looking far from well herself. With that perverse penchant of blondes for yellow, she wore a pale straw-colored silk, with flowers of the same color in her hair, and nothing brighter to relieve it. So when contrasted with Gertrude's brilliant beauty she presented but a faded, washed-out appearance.

It was a week since that fatal evening when little Rosa, by her childish prattle, had awakened her father's pride, and Gertrude had been far from happy. She told herself she did not care,

but she did care a great deal more than was good for her peace of mind. She had spent the evenings as usual in the parlor, but Mr. Ward no longer gave her those words and looks of warm approval when in some contest with Miss Cecil, but devoted the greater part of his time to that lady.

Miss Ward, too, influenced by her, was cold to Gertrude; but at times, in an outburst of contrition and genuine love for her, would give her some warm word or caress. Strange to say, as Mr. Ward grew more attentive to Miss Cecil, his sister did not appear satisfied, for Miss Cecil, sunning herself in her host's smiles, and counting too much on her false security, neglected his sister, who often now turned to Gertrude for sympathy instead of to dear Lucy. It had been a hard week for the whole family; Mr. and Miss Ward were far from happy, and Gertrude, feeling as though she were being punished for no fault of her own, and not having seen Ralph since his quarrel with Mr. Ward, found the evenings in the parlor unutterably stupid. While Mr. Ward, uncomfortable and discontented, tried to satisfy himself with his pride, though with little success. He was too proud to make any advance to Gertrude, and though he scouted Ralph's folly in thinking of any serious feeling in connection with the governess, he did all he could to awaken her jealousy by redoubled attention to Miss Cecil.

Meanwhile, the strains of music were filling the air, and Gertrude, proud of and elated by her success, and encouraged by the friendly glances of Mrs. Livingston and Miss Ward, longed for the approval of her host.

She would have liked so much to have their little trouble done away with now, and have the same happy evenings in the school-room as before. For, as I have said, she was beginning to value his pleasure and to feel distressed at his displeasure. There were some vacancies left on her card, and she hoped his name would fill the blanks. She knew he danced, for she had heard Mrs. Livingston and Ralph speak of the delight he had taken in it years ago. So those little blanks were scrupulously reserved, and she trusted he would come and add his name before the evening was over. She had seen him dancing with Miss Cecil, and she determined, if it were possible, he should do the same with herself.

The evening was fading away, and she hardly knew how to preserve those places without appearing rude or singular, as she had had so many partners. Mr. Ward was passing her again, for the third or fourth time, with Miss Cecil on his arm; their eyes met, and Gertrude read something that was not wholly disapproval in that glance. The temptation was great to drop Ralph's beautiful bouquet and run the chance of his picking it up for her. Mr. Ward was longing to speak to her too, not wishing to be on the same formal terms they had been for the last few days, and he was trusting for some lucky event to break through the ice; so the bouquet, as it accidentally fell from her hand, was just the thing he wanted.

"My beautiful flowers!" She clasped her hands in affected consternation.

"Thank you, Mr. Ward." And she held the flowers to her face, dropping her fan, so as to delay him still longer, and provoke Miss Cecil.

"I am very sorry; you will think me dreadfully awkward." As the fan was restored.

"Not at all, Miss Lyle; are you having a pleasant evening?" The words were cool and commonplace, but the eyes were the reverse, as they looked into hers; and he forgot his pride in her great beauty, and his pleasure in being with her. Meanwhile Miss Cecil, feeling herself of so little importance, and seeing that Mr. Ward had no intention of moving for the present, stood by, taking in all the beauty of Gertrude's face and dress, and envying her jewels until tired. Perceiving her present position to be an awkward one, she finally took the arm of one of Gertrude's numerous admirers, and walked away, intending to punish Mr. Ward for his inattention.

That gentleman, however, did not appear to notice his loss, but talked gayly to Gertrude, admiring her beauty, set off to full advantage by her elegant dress. He determined to throw pride to the winds, and win her love, if it were possible, and then the mystery about her would be solved.

"You have been dancing all the evening, I suppose, and have no room for me?" He looked at the closely-filled little piece of pasteboard. "Why, here, and here, and here!" as he descried the blanks. "I don't know much about dancing, it has been so long since I have had any experience. But will you try me?"

"Yes; I kept the places for you, thinking——" She bit her lip, provoked that in her excitement and the joy of their reconciliation she had betrayed herself.

"Did you, Miss Lyle?—that was very kind." And he looked pleased and amused as he filled in the blanks with his name.

"Mrs. Livingston told me you danced remarkably well, and I thought——" But although she tried to explain, she could not destroy the charm of her first frank avowal, and the blushing face with which it was made. So a very well satisfied smile played round Mr. Ward's mouth as he wrote down his name in all the vacant places.

"I see Ralph has been before me. I am sorry I shall not have the pleasure of taking you in to supper, but will have to content myself with some one much less to my choice." Mr. Ward was rewarding frankness with frankness, and Gertrude appeared to appreciate it, for she knew the less pleasant person was Miss Cecil.

"Excuse me, Mr. Ward; I must go." Her partner came for the galop. Mr. Ward stood and watched her, enjoying her pleasure almost as much as she did herself, as his kind sympathizing face told every time she passed him. He was looking much better than usual. She had never seen him before in evening dress, and it was very becoming, and showed off his fine figure to advantage. He was much the handsomest man in the room, at least Gertrude thought so when she looked at him, and she felt strangely happy when she saw that he was perfectly content in holding her fan and flowers, and waiting till she should have finished, not appearing at all to care for returning to Miss Cecil.

"How perfectly you dance, Miss Lyle! I am almost ashamed to offer myself as a partner." He stood by her again, much to the disgust of the gentleman with whom she had been dancing, for Gertrude, not so tired as longing for a few more words of approval, paused before the music had ceased.

"Do you think so? I was taught by the best masters in Paris." She smiled brilliantly, though she hardly understood why his few words of praise were so much more dear to her than all the compliments that had been lavished on her that evening.

"I never saw any one dance so gracefully; though, for the last few years, I have not had much experience in anything of that kind. I had no idea, when I spoke jestingly of sending for your dress the other day, that you were so well supplied. Miss Lyle has as perfect taste in that as in everything else." His admiration was so plainly written on his face, Gertrude knew he meant all he said.

"You admire my taste in bonnets also, Mr. Ward?" Gertrude, who had changed her obnoxious head-gear, and had noticed his expression when he had met her with it on, smiled mischievously.

"Yes, in bonnets too." Mr. Ward, who wondered how she could read his thoughts so well, laughed with her.

"Brother!" Miss Ward laid her hand on her brother's arm. "Do you know they have opened over a dozen bottles of wine for that horrid punch? I wish you would see to it. I am afraid they will open more."

"Margaret, you don't want me to open wine for your guests?" Mr. Ward looked at Gertrude and laughed.

"No; of course not. But I wish you would stop the waiters asking for so many things; James said they wanted green tea for the punch too. Did you ever hear of such a thing, Gertrude? Dear! dear! we will never get the house

straight again." And Miss Ward bustled off with a very red face.

"Ralph, you may take Miss Cecil in to supper, Miss Lyle and I will follow you." Mr. Ward handed Gertrude her fan as Ralph shook his head and offered her his arm.

"Miss Lyle, your health!" Mr. Ward was again by Gertrude's side in the supper-room.

"Brother,"—Miss Ward again interrupted,—
"do you know James says they have twelve dozen spoons; did you ever hear of such a thing?"

"Margaret, I do wish you would send James to bed, and try and be happy yourself. Please try and do something else besides counting the spoons, forks, and empty wine bottles." He again turned to Gertrude.

"But, brother,"—and her hand was laid on his arm,—
"do you know I stepped on something near the window, and it stuck to my foot? Look!" She held a piece of crystallized fruit between her finger and thumb. "It is those candied baskets; they are making them fly all over the room, and will ruin the carpet. I do wish you would break the next up yourself."

"Excuse me, Miss Lyle: I suppose I must go and relieve Margaret's anxiety." Mr. Ward felt like giving his sister a good shaking, for he again had to leave Gertrude, while Miss Ward, satisfied for the time, hurried off to find new disasters.

The evening passed only too rapidly for Gertrude, who had all the unspoiled freshness of youth to add to her pleasure; everything was complete now, and she could enter into the gay scene without fearing Mr. Ward's disapproval. Miss Cecil's sour face grew a shade more acid as

she watched her talking to Mr. Ward, evidently on the best of terms after all she had done to prejudice him against her. Miss Cecil managed to make Miss Ward thoroughly uncomfortable, and spoil the pleasure she was enjoying in watching Gertrude's eager, animated face, by calling attention to her dress, and making the most disagreeable suggestions she could possibly think of; so that Miss Ward, anxious and worried, waited with anything but satisfaction the termination of the evening, to ask an explanation of Miss Lyle, as Miss Cecil had suggested. Every one in the room wondered who Miss Lyle was, as Miss Cecil had not been idle; but they were more easily satisfied than that lady, trusting in Mrs. Livingston's and Mr. Ward's approval. The animation and beauty of the girl's face won admiration from all, much to Miss Cecil's disgust, who found that Gertrude's pleasure remained unspoiled by all her endeavors to destroy it.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THEIR guests had all gone by the early train, and Mr. Ward's quiet household had settled down to their sober track, except that the servants looked sleepy, and went more slowly about their usual duties; all the traces of the last night's gayety had vanished as if by magic. Only Miss Ward had uneasy thoughts; but as Miss Ward is one of those persons who delight always in being in trouble, I am afraid my readers will hardly sympathize with her present distress.

"Brother!"

"What is it, Margaret?"

"Did you notice Miss Lyle's dress last evening—and her jewels?"

"I noticed that she was much the handsomest girl in the room, and her dress was marvelously becoming." He stretched himself and yawned, not having recovered the effects of his dissipation.

"But the jewels, brother?" Miss Ward did not feel as much displeased by her brother's admiration of the governess as she had done a few weeks before. "I asked Mrs. Livingston if she were not surprised; but you know she always excuses Miss Lyle. Dear Lucy said——"

"Hang dear Lucy! Margaret, when does Miss Cecil intend to take her departure? I am thoroughly tired of her! I was sorry last evening

we put ourselves to so much trouble on her account, as she was anything but agreeable."

"Dear Lucy has not had a pleasant life, and she is not like she used to be, dear." Miss Ward brought up her usual apology with but little success, though it was a great acknowledgment from her; but she was very tired of her guest.

"That is no reason why she should be as sharp as a steel-trap. I wondered at Miss Lyle's forbearance several times last evening. She made every one thoroughly understand that she was our governess."

"And why not, brother? I have no doubt it was meant to excuse any little awkwardness." Miss Ward still weakly clung to her favorite.

"Meant! the d—l! It was sheer ill nature, Margaret. I would like you to make Miss Cecil understand that Miss Lyle is not to be insulted with impunity. When does she intend going? Does she contemplate making this her permanent home?"

"John dear, don't be so unkind! She is only waiting till her aunt comes to New York, when she will join her. Mrs. Cecil it appears has been detained."

"I hope we will soon see the last of her; but meanwhile, Margaret, give her to understand that she must act differently toward Miss Lyle." Mr. Ward was entirely forgetting how for the last week he had not noticed Miss Cecil's conduct to Miss Lyle, and if not countenancing, had silently ignored the slights, as he felt thoroughly out of humor with Gertrude.

"But, John, you wholly forget what I was talking to you about—Miss Lyle's dress."

"What was the matter, Margaret,—did not you think it becoming?"

He always delighted in misunderstanding her.

"It was beautiful, John; but——"

"Well, Margaret?"

"Where could she get such a dress?"

"Bought it in New York, I suppose. Did you think she had ordered it from Paris?" Mr. Ward was so well satisfied in having made up his little quarrel with Gertrude that he quite enjoyed teasing his sister.

"But, John dear, it would take a great deal of money, and Miss Lyle is only a governess. Don't you think it strange?"

"Miss Lyle is a strangely lovely young woman, Margaret." And happy in the remembrance of his pleasant evening and Gertrude's frankness with him, but most of all their return to their old relations, Mr. Ward smiled pleasantly.

"Do, John, try and be serious." Miss Ward was provoked. "Dear Lucy thinks——"

"If you will tell me what you think, Margaret, I will listen patiently; but if you intend to echo Miss Cecil, who has no warm feeling for Miss Lyle, you cannot expect me to do the same."

"Well then, John, don't you think it strange she should dress so? And those diamonds: Mrs. Livingston even appeared troubled, and could not explain."

"Cannot you think something kind of the poor girl, and not always take up the worst conclusions? Miss Lyle has her secret, as we all know; and I don't think it is any one's business how she dresses, so that she does her duty and is a lady. Least of all is it Miss Cecil's business to make remarks on one's private affairs." Mr. Ward, who did not like the mystery any more than his sister, tried to excuse Gertrude.

"Lucy is such an old friend, brother."

"I know, Margaret; but we were a great deal happier before she came, and she shall not play the mischief-maker any longer. Let Miss Lyle alone—we might have a much worse governess. The children are doing well, and so rest satisfied, as that is all we want."

"May I come in?" A gentle tap was heard at the door, and Gertrude blushing opened it.

"Come in! certainly, Miss Lyle. Margaret and I were just talking of how well you looked last evening." He did not heed his sister, who dreaded though she longed for a renewal of their old intercourse with Gertrude, while she watched her brother but half satisfied.

"I came for that volume of poems you spoke of last evening, if you are not too much occupied."

"Certainly not, Miss Lyle." Mr. Ward laughed as he looked at his library, so ill assorted, though since Miss Lyle's coming the poets had not been so entirely banished to their place on the upper shelves. A stray volume was seen every now and then, sadly out of place with his books on more solid subjects. "Shelley is far up out of my reach." He put his foot on a chair, from which he had tumbled the books, while he searched eagerly for the book he wanted; and his sister stood by, longing to unbend, and still not liking to see her brother waiting on the governess. "My poets are sadly neglected, Miss Lyle, and will be glad of a little sunlight." He took down a dusty little volume, which he looked at ruefully, and the next moment his clean white handkerchief received the dust, while his sister stood uncomfortably looking at him.

"Won't you please shut that door, Miss Ward?"

Gertrude turned to her with the book in her hand, as she noticed that the door of the room interfered with the open door of the bookcase.

"Certainly, dear." Miss Ward closed it, entirely forgetting that she too was waiting on the governess; but afterward remembering, straightened herself up stiffly, determining to make her feel her place.

"I hope you enjoyed yourself last evening, Miss Lyle?"

"Indeed I did, Miss Ward." The frank, girlish face was raised to her own, full of the pleasant remembrance.

"Your dress, Miss Lyle. Miss Cecil——" Miss Ward, usually vague in her statements, and conscious that she had brought in an unlucky name, paused; while her brother's face clouded, for he wished Margaret would learn a little good sense and let Lucy Cecil alone.

"I hope Miss Cecil liked my dress." Gertrude smiled saucily as she remembered how unamiable Miss Cecil had looked.

"Miss Cecil thought it beautiful; but don't you think——Where did you get it, Miss Lyle?" Miss Ward was evidently troubled.

"Miss Cecil wants to know where I got it? In New York, at Madame L'Estrange's, on Broadway above Fourteenth Street. Shall I write you the direction, Miss Ward?" Gertrude appeared as innocent as possible, while she took up a pencil from the table.

"No, Miss Lyle." Miss Ward did not look very amiable. "I do not like such levity. You must acknowledge, in a person in your position, it is rather strange to have the jewels you wore

last evening, or even the dress. I cannot understand where or how you could get them." Miss Ward tried her best to seem icy.

"I know it appears strange." Gertrude looked pleadingly at her. "I am very sorry I did it; but it was a great temptation—Miss Cecil dislikes me so thoroughly."

"Right, Miss Lyle. I admire your spirit." Mr. Ward laughed at the remembrance of Miss Cecil's annoyance, much to his sister's disgust.

"But you must know it is strange, and we must have an explanation." Then, melted by the girl's face, she added: "You know you can make it all satisfactory if you please, dear."

"I am sorry, Miss Ward, but I cannot explain, and if you are not satisfied, I will have to leave you. You know, when I first came, you understood that I could not tell you of my past life. I have been very silly and vain, and am punished for making myself so conspicuous." Her eyes filled with tears, for she felt that there were more reasons than one why she would dread leaving her present home.

"Oh, Miss Lyle, I did not mean that." Miss Ward, troubled and sorry that she had spoken, and seeing no encouragement in her brother's face, hastened to add: "I did not mean to make you feel uncomfortable, but you must acknowledge it is strange, and dear Lucy——"

"Yes, I understand, Miss Ward." Gertrude's face changed entirely. "Miss Cecil has been playing the mischief-maker, and it would be more kind and more worthy of a lady not to create dissension in a family when on a visit."

"You are perfectly right, Miss Lyle," Mr. Ward interrupted. "Miss Cecil has no business to

make any trouble here, and the sooner she shortens her visit the happier we will all be. My sister and myself are both perfectly satisfied with your care of the children, and though we would like to have your confidence, we can trust you."

"Thank you, sir; you are very kind." Gertrude, in her eagerness, took his hand. "I would like to tell Miss Ward and yourself very much, but I can't, and can only ask your confidence in me. I am unfortunate in having a secret, but I cannot help it." Her eyes were full of tears. "Excuse me, Miss Ward, if I have been abrupt." She raised her hand deprecatingly. "Miss Cecil has been very unkind, and she has no right. The diamonds were my mother's, and left me by her. It was a piece of foolish girlish vanity to wear them, but, as I said before, the temptation was great. The dress was a silly purchase of my own before I came here, and it was so pretty that"—and Gertrude smiled as she remembered her triumph of the night before—"I really could not help wearing it."

"Never mind, dear. I have been a very foolish old woman, and shall not interfere again, though I did not mean to be unkind. It would be so much better, dear, if we knew all."

"Yes, certainly it would." Gertrude sighed. "I wish it could be so, Miss Ward, but I cannot help it."

"As for the dress," said Mr. Ward, laughing, "it was marvelously becoming, and I am glad you wore it. We would have missed you terribly last night. I see you have not put your hair back in those straight bands in which you had it before. It is very much more becoming as it is." Mr. Ward looked at his sister as she stroked the

young girl's rippling locks, and kissed her blushing face. It was aggravating of Margaret in the extreme; she was always bent on aggravating him.

Mr. Ward kept his thoughts to himself, trusting, if all fared prosperously, as he had a very strong hope it would, he might have the right to a nearer and dearer place.

"Margaret does not give us much hope of getting rid of Miss Cecil, which is a great misfortune; but I think we can bear the infliction better now;" and remembering the week that he had thrown away, he determined to act more wisely in the future. "What was it that Vannino was telling me, Miss Lyle?" He tried to change the subject.

"It is Vannino's birthday, and he wanted to have you take tea with us in the school-room." Gertrude, remembering the last evening there, blushed painfully as she spoke.

"How old is the little monkey?"

"Seven years old to-day."

"He is getting to be quite a little man, thanks to you, Miss Lyle! Margaret, do you hear what Miss Lyle says? Will you come?"

"I will try if I can, dear." Miss Ward put her hand on that of the young girl. "I don't know if I can leave Lucy. Do try to be patient with her. She is not as she used to be; she has had a great deal of trouble." Miss Ward sighed.

She firmly believed that Miss Cecil was a victim of blighted affection, and still cherished a passion for her brother which Miss Ward feared would never be returned. She wondered at herself that she did not feel more sorry, such being

the case; but dear Lucy did not occupy the same place in her affections that she had once done, and she was consequently more hard-hearted. Miss Ward, pleading her cares of housekeeping, left her brother and Miss Lyle deep in a discussion of Shelley and the poets of his time.

CHAPTER XXV.

THIS evening in the school-room was a greater success than the last. Miss Cecil, tired by her dissipation of the previous night, had retired to her room, as she found the gentlemen intended spending the evening with the children. She was disgusted and angry that her own fair face did not charm them to the parlor, so went to her room in anything but an enviable state of mind, finally releasing Miss Ward, who had been longing to accept her little nephew's invitation, but could not in politeness leave her guest.

"Aunt Margaret! Aunt Margaret!" Both the children ran to greet her rapturously, while Vannino waited doubtfully until she closed the door.

"And no Miss Cecil?" The little fellow looked quite anxious until his uncertainty was at last relieved. Aunt Margaret could not help joining in the laugh that greeted the question, as she too had been much tried by Miss Cecil, who was thoroughly out of humor.

"Why don't you like Miss Cecil, Vannino?" His aunt had learned to call him by that name at last.

"I know," promptly interrupted Rosa, who was too bright for her age, and, like all children, fond of making malapropos speeches. "She never kisses us except when papa is by, and I know why." And the little girl, who knew a great deal

more than she should have known, saucily shook her head. The others laughed as she added: "She don't love Miss Lyle, and every one loves Miss Lyle; don't they, papa?" With a child's persistency she returned to the forbidden subject, wanting to be satisfied.

"Certainly, Rosa!" Mr. Ward lifted her on his knee.

Vannino had deferred his tea party, thinking, as his father suggested, Aunt Margaret might be able to run away and come later; so the tea came in directly after Miss Ward's arrival. Miss Lyle must cut the bread and butter as usual for them, because it was so much better; and as Ralph and Mr. Ward seconded the child, Gertrude, blushing and embarrassed, and not particularly liking her task, went bravely through with it.

Miss Ward, seated in the most comfortable chair, with her plate filled with good things, was enjoying herself as much as the children, and no longer wondered at the charm of the school-room. Aunt Margaret, foolish woman, only saw the children, and though she recognized Gertrude's care in keeping them in order, and managing them so nicely, the little ones had all her attention, and she listened, delighted, and interested in their childish speeches.

Rosa, as usual, did all the talking,—Vannino was only her echo; no longer the spoilt, unruly children they had been, they were now as good as children naturally troublesome would be. The sense of injustice was no longer felt, and Rosa's quick temper was under better control. She was no longer the passionate, willful child, her aunt had first known, but was now always eager and ready to be controlled by a

word from Gertrude. The child's heart had been entirely melted and softened by love.

Aunt Margaret watched the young girl as she moved about so lightly and easily, and wondered at the change she had wrought in so short a time, and at the firm place she had gained in their hearts. Aunt Margaret was one of those women who must have something to pet: her "baby brother" did not always submit gracefully, and had rather outgrown her care; so Gertrude, if she had not been the governess, would have been installed with regal honors in her heart; but even as it was we have seen how hard it was for her to preserve her dignity.

"How did you enjoy yourself last evening, Gertrude?" And Ralph held out his cup to be filled.

"Very much. I am so fond of dancing. How delightful that last galop was, Ralph!" Her eyes sparkled at the remembrance. Mr. Ward danced much better than Ralph, but she could not praise him so easily; and he wondered if she did not like him as well, because she could not talk as freely with him. He did not know that Gertrude was more anxious of gaining his good opinion, and therefore was more careful with him than with Ralph; consequently, she did not appear to the same advantage.

"John dances much better than I do, Gertrude; you only say that to flatter me."

"Mr. Ward dances much better than any one I ever knew." The praise that came to her lips was very genuine, while her eyes sought the carpet as she remembered one long, delicious waltz with her host, who danced so easily, and held her so firmly that she never tired. Gertrude

remembered also that she was the only lady he had waltzed with, and the thought was very pleasant.

"I knew you could only qualify your praise of me after dancing with John," said Ralph, smiling. "John, you are the most remarkable man I ever knew in one respect; you never forget what you learn. My mother told me years ago he was the best dancer in New York, and last night he put us all to the blush. Why did you not dance with Miss Cecil?"

"I am out of practice, and was afraid of intruding on any one's patience but Miss Lyle's; I knew she was amiable. I too like a good partner, and I don't think Miss Cecil knows anything about the matter, though you did not appear to be as particular." Mr. Ward laughed. "I saw you floundering through one dance, and the expression of your face was quite enough for me." Ralph joined good-naturedly in Mr. Ward's laugh.

"You are right, John; Miss Cecil's dancing is as unfortunate as her poetry, and several other things. Don't you think so, Gertrude?"

"It would be unkind to judge one of my own sex harshly, and particularly when I don't like the lady in question."

"You are all very unkind to poor Lucy, and I won't listen to it; she has had a great deal to make her serious." Miss Ward shook her head reprovingly at her brother.

"I am surprised at your still cherishing that foolish idea; it is too good to be lost." In disregard of her pleading face he explained: "Margaret has an idea that Miss Cecil is a victim of unrequited affection, and I am the hard-hearted

individual who is doomed to blight all her hopes. Last week I tried my best for your sake, as Miss Lyle knows." Mr. Ward laughed heartily as Gertrude made a funny little *moue*, in remembering how hurt she had felt by his neglect.

"Miss Lyle is a hundred times better than Miss Cecil—don't you think so, Uncle Ralph?" said Rosa.

"Yes, a hundred times." Finding the remarks were getting too personal, and pitying Gertrude's blushing face, he changed the subject.

"You did not know that Ralph and I had quarreled irrevocably, and you healed the breach last evening; did you, Miss Lyle?"

"No, I did not. But I am truly glad if I was the means of bringing Ralph here again. We have missed you very much, Ralph."

So in pleasant talk the evening sped away only too quickly for their mutual satisfaction; while Miss Cecil sat in her room and had many bitter thoughts.

Aunt Margaret, when she went to her room that evening, thought much of Gertrude, and even went so far as to think how nice it would be if Miss Cecil was Gertrude, and Gertrude Miss Cecil; never reflecting how badly Rosa and Vannino might fare through her wishes. "Gertrude would have made a dear wife for John if only she were not the governess." Miss Ward sighed. She would have loved her so much, and the children already loved her, but then she was the governess, and the thought was not to be cherished for an instant.

Although in her own case Miss Ward had been satisfied to live in single blessedness, it was very different in respect to her brother, and she

was much more ambitious for him. It is wonderful what an interest the elderly female relatives of a family take on this one subject; and how seldom the schemes and hopes meet with the success that those exertions merit. How they revel in their dreams in theory, though so seldom are those dreams realized! Those pattern husbands and wives are always looked on coldly by the ones most interested.

So Miss Ward put out her light, and laid her head on her pillow, and had many troublesome thoughts. What if Gertrude were to get married herself and leave them to their old life—it would be too dreadful to think of. If dear Lucy were only more amiable. But dear Lucy was as she was, and Gertrude Lyle was the governess unfortunately, so with many thoughts confided to her pillow, Miss Ward went to sleep. She dreamed of dear Lucy as a Gorgon, and Miss Lyle as an angel, or something of that kind; and then awoke to scold herself for her unkind thoughts of dear Lucy, which were never to be repeated to any one. Then in the midst of her perplexity she went to sleep, and dreamt of dear Lucy as a fiery dragon. It was too bad; but old ladies should not take tea in the school-room if they will have that beverage so very strong.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE evening passed so pleasantly in the school-room was one of bitter thought to Miss Cecil; she had built so many hopes on this visit, and was so perfectly confident of winning Mr. Ward's heart, that the disappointment and mortification were very great. She had been much encouraged by her host's attention of the last week, and now everything was going back into the old track, and she had only injured her prospects by her treatment of Miss Lyle. She knew Mr. Ward sufficiently well to know that he would not have paid Gertrude the attentions he had done the evening before, unless he cared for her more than her place as governess warranted.

She disliked Gertrude more than ever, now that she saw so plainly the interest written on Mr. Ward's face, and knew it would not be through any fault of his if she did not fill the place that she coveted so much herself. She had only lowered herself in his mind by her insinuations, and the temper she had shown toward her, without gaining anything by it; and though she rather disliked Mr. Ward, she longed for the wealth and position she would gain as his wife.

She had good sense enough to know that if Gertrude, by a few words spoken the evening before, could undo all she had been doing, there

was little hope of her gaining any influence over him. So Miss Cecil went down to breakfast in anything but an amiable frame of mind, and showed it so plainly in her manner, that poor Miss Ward was on tenter-hooks all through breakfast for fear of an explosion.

Mr. Ward had fallen into the habit of reading the paper as he took his coffee, so the two ladies were left very much to their own devices.

"You had a pleasant time last evening, Mr. Ward?" Miss Cecil tried her best to look amiable, though she did not succeed very well.

"Yes, delightful; Miss Lyle has the rare charm of making every one happy around her." He raised his eyes wickedly to his sister, who felt anything but at ease at that present moment.

"Miss Lyle is a very nice young woman, I have no doubt; but is it the custom in New York to treat a governess as one of the family?" Miss Cecil appeared interested, and as if asking for information.

"That depends upon circumstances, Miss Cecil; a lady always carries her respectability with her wherever she may be placed; it is not the situation that degrades the person, but the person the situation; don't you think so?"

"I really do not know, Mr. Ward. I should think it would be rather troublesome and of little consequence to make those distinctions."

"Do you think so? I do not agree with you. Miss Lyle is intelligent, and a perfect lady both in appearance and manner, and has done more for my children than I can ever repay her for. Don't you think so, Margaret?"

"Yes!" poor Miss Ward said weakly, not liking to be brought into discussions when they

did not promise to be pleasant. "Miss Lyle is a dear, good girl, and the children love her dearly; but then, brother, as dear Lucy says, you should remember her position as governess."

"That is unfortunate; but from the attention she received the other evening, I am afraid she will not hold that place long." A happy smile played round his lips as he thought of the young girl's pure, trusting eyes, so often now raised to his own for sympathy; and he hoped before very long she would hold a different place in his house from that she now occupied.

"Miss Lyle, I think, is very much admired by Mr. Livingston." She wanted to give him a parting stab. "Did it never strike you as strange that she allows him to call her by her first name, and appears perfectly at home with him on so short an acquaintance?"

"Miss Lyle, I think, could judge better for herself than we can; and I should think, Miss Cecil, that it would not be worth the trouble to think so much of a person in her position." Mr. Ward was quoting her own words. "I am glad to see she interests you so much." Mr. Ward busied himself with his paper, tired of the discussion.

"I had a letter from my aunt yesterday, and she is very anxious to have me return to New York."

"So soon, Lucy? Why, I thought——" Miss Ward paused for her brother to say something, but he was too deeply interested in his paper. "I thought, dear, we were to have you some time longer. John, dear, do you hear what Lucy is saying?"

"What is it?" Mr. Ward put down his paper,

provoked at his sister for bringing him into the discussion; and knowing that in the kindness of her heart she wished him to ask Miss Cecil to stay longer. Mr. Ward was much more flinty-hearted than his sister, and had no intention of doing anything of the kind.

"Dear Lucy says that her aunt wrote to her yesterday, asking her to return to New York immediately."

"It is sooner than we expected." Mr. Ward, though he tried to control his face, could not help looking relieved. "Miss Cecil knows her own pleasure better than we do, Margaret." Provoked at his sister for not having strength of mind to do as he was doing, he frowned in answer to her pleading face, for he did not intend that she should extend the invitation.

"I think, therefore, I must leave to-morrow, Miss Ward," Miss Cecil said crossly, as she fully expected Mr. Ward to oppose her departure, and was disappointed; for the letter was a pure fiction on her part, and would never have been mentioned if she had had any idea of the result.

"It is very soon, dear," Miss Ward weakly murmured. "But, of course, if your aunt wants you, I cannot oppose your going." Miss Ward, who was thoroughly tired of Miss Cecil, and was only prompted by her good nature to ask her to prolong her stay, looked at her brother for approval.

"I am going to the station this morning, so I can see to your ticket and make all the arrangements. By what train do you intend going?"

"The earliest, Mr. Ward." Miss Cecil determined, since she must go, to make herself as troublesome as she could; and knew quite well that

it would not suit either her host or hostess as well as if she had gone later.

"Very well, Miss Cecil." Mr. Ward, perfectly indifferent, again resumed his paper.

Mr. Ward had no right (I think my readers will all agree with me) to be so very attentive to Miss Cecil, and then to throw her aside entirely, and acting as he was at present. But then Miss Cecil was equally wrong in playing the mischief-maker; and Mr. Ward would have treated her very differently if she had not behaved as she had done. But provoked and wearied out, and thinking only of Gertrude, the unexpected shortening of her visit was truly welcome. Miss Ward was happy too that she could fall back into her old routine, and only excused herself by saying that it had been very quiet for dear Lucy. Even the children rejoiced over her departure, and Gertrude could not help smiling at their delight, though she tried to reprove them.

Miss Cecil's last days passed away slowly for Miss Ward, as that lady made herself very far from agreeable, and though Miss Ward was kind-hearted she was sadly fretted and out of temper; and it was, therefore, with a great feeling of relief the next morning that she saw the carriage drive away from the door, though stupid and out of sorts, as through Miss Cecil's selfishness they were obliged to have breakfast much before their usual time.

After Miss Cecil's departure, Mr. Ward fell into his old habit of going almost every evening to take tea with the children; yet I doubt if the children were much thought of at these times. Finally it came to be a customary thing, though Aunt Margaret grumbled at having to

take hers alone, but she could not quarrel with her brother's returning love for his children. Gertrude persisted in taking her meals with them; and as they had an early dinner, their little supper followed closely on Miss Ward's and her brother's. Once or twice Aunt Margaret had been induced to come up-stairs, and feeling lonely and finding it pleasant, she came quite often. At last it came to be the regular arrangement that Miss Ward and her brother should take their tea with Miss Lyle and the children. At first Miss Ward had talked indignantly about the foolishness of the arrangement and the trouble it gave the servants, just to please Miss Lyle. Her brother, however, reminded her that it had been her own arrangement when Miss Lyle first came, and now she must abide by it, or else take her tea alone, as he thought the school-room the most agreeable room in the house. Now if Miss Ward had a weakness, it was for her cup of tea, and as she was of a sociable disposition, and did not like taking that beverage alone, she was obliged to go to the school-room for it too. Miss Ward was beginning to think with her brother (though she did not say so) that the great charm was owing to the young girl who presided there.

Sometimes Mr. Ward went away for a few days to New York, and Gertrude found the house strangely sad and cold during his absence. The grounds did not look the same, and she even missed the heavy tramp of his boots as he went up and down stairs. Then she missed their evening talks; and as their father's name was always on the children's lips, she had no chance of forgetting him. He was always pleasant now,

and ready to help her and sympathize with her, and though she still rode occasionally with Ralph, and enjoyed being with him, he could not fill Mr. Ward's place. She could no longer conceal from herself that she loved the proud man, and was only truly happy when with him.

How she sorrowed over her secret, and wished she could have told all; but that could not be, and she sighed and shook her head when she thought of the barrier that lay between them. She knew that he loved her by various little signs. She had heard him so often say he could not love a stranger, but it must be a person who would trust him, and whom he perfectly knew. He was thinking of his past life, and the misery his trust had brought him, and he would not risk a second trial. And Gertrude, when she remembered and sorrowed, thinking of what Ralph had told her, said to herself that he could never be more to her than he was now. She could marry no man who would not trust her perfectly, and never till she was a wife could she reveal her secret. So while Miss Ward was won to love and respect her, and realized that her brother's happiness lay in her hands, she tried to unravel the mystery, and only worried and troubled Gertrude more without coming any nearer the truth. She guarded the secret very carefully, though she longed to be rid of it; and Miss Ward, finding her little arts were of no avail, wisely determined to leave the riddle to her brother for solution. She never for an instant doubted that any one her brother loved would not give back double measure of love in return.

CHAPTER XXVII.

ONE morning, about a month after Miss Cecil's departure, Ralph and Mr. Ward stood in the hall waiting for Gertrude, who intended taking a ride with Ralph. The horses were being led up and down before the door, and Mr. Ward was remonstrating with Ralph on some point on which they evidently did not agree.

"I wish you had not brought that horse for Miss Lyle. Suppose that you leave it here, and take another for her."

"There is really no danger, John. I have ridden the horse myself, and Gertrude asked me to bring him. She has ridden Bess before, and if she don't like him, I can easily have the saddles changed. But here she is to answer for herself. Good morning, Gertrude! Mr. Ward thinks you had better not ride the new horse. What say you? I can easily have the saddles changed."

"Oh, what a perfect beauty!" Gertrude looked in admiration at the horse, that certainly merited all her praise. "No, Ralph, there is no need in making any alteration; he looks as though he would go splendidly."

"I am afraid he will be rather too much for you, Miss Lyle." Mr. Ward held her pretty riding-whip while she buttoned her gloves.

"I don't think there is a bit of danger." Her eyes were raised pleadingly to his face. "Ralph

says he has been ridden by a lady before, and you know I am not timid."

"I won't say any more, Miss Lyle." Mr. Ward could not resist the bright, sunny face, so full of excitement and expectation of her coming pleasure; and though he did not feel satisfied, followed her down the steps, and put Gertrude in the saddle. Lately it had always fallen to his lot to perform this little office for her, and though he had not as much time at his disposal as Ralph, and had only ridden with her once or twice, he was always there to see her off.

"What a beautiful creature he is!" She bent to pat the horse's glossy neck. "If you really are uneasy, and think there is any danger, I will not go."

"Ralph knows a great deal more than I do about horses, and I dare say it is all right." Not wanting to spoil her pleasure, he admired the horse too, and hoped they would have a pleasant time.

"Remember me to your mother, Ralph." It was to Mrs. Livingston's Gertrude was going. Bowing and smiling, he stood watching them till they were out of sight.

Gertrude looked better on horseback than at any other time, for she rode well, and enjoyed it more than anything else. Her light graceful figure appeared to full advantage on her horse, set off as it was by her perfectly-fitting habit—Mrs. Livingston's gift.

Mr. Ward and Ralph understood each other perfectly now, and were more together than before Miss Cecil's arrival.

It was a lovely morning, and, happy and ex-

cited, Gertrude cantered easily along, enjoying the paces of her new horse.

"How beautifully he goes, Ralph! I wish Mr. Ward could see him now." Gertrude's glowing face was full of enjoyment as they pulled their horses up for a walk.

"You manage him perfectly, Gertrude, and I think John would be more than satisfied if he could see us. I am so glad you are learning to like John. I told you you would do him justice some day. You have no idea what a hard life he has had; he was so young when he was married, just at the time when he needed sympathy and love the most, and he was so shamefully treated!"

"Do you think he ever mourns for his wife?" Gertrude could not help looking interested.

"No indeed! How could he regret the death of one who acted so shamefully?—leaving her poor little children for that scamp; and he soon found out that she had never cared for him. John, too, was so young at that time, I don't think he realized what he was about; he was more dazzled, and led on by excitement than love, so my mother thinks. The signorina used the most subtle wiles to win him."

"Do you ever speak of his wife to him?"

"No, I never did but that morning he told me of her death. I never knew a man so wildly happy. Poor fellow! He acted like a boy, and told me that he felt like a prisoner released. For a long time afterward I noticed how he watched the papers,—he was afraid of a mention of his folly; but fortunately the story was forgotten, and the signorina was only spoken of by her maiden name. He is a very proud man, and

very sensitive. I think he had a horror of some day having trouble about his children, and he could not bear the thought of an exposure."

"I did not think he appeared to care for the children when I first came."

"Well, do you wonder, Gertrude?—you saw the influence that Italian exerted. He is very sensitive, as I have said, and the poor little things really seemed to hate him; you know by your own experience how all has changed, and how fond he is of them now. Miss Ward is sick so much, and she is not naturally fond of children; for she does not understand them. I often used to pity the poor little things before you came, they appeared so lonely and friendless. It troubled their father, and he said he would like them to have a chance, as he had a great dread of Rosa being like her mother. The child very much resembles her in appearance, though fortunately inheriting her father's disposition. John had grown careless about them, as he did not exactly know what to do; and a man after all cannot take a woman's place in that respect. You don't know how often he speaks to me, Gertrude, of the great change you have made, and the esteem he has for you." As Ralph watched the vivid blush that dyed her face, he decided his friend need have no fears of the result of his love for her, for Ralph knew Mr. Ward's secret and encouraged him in his passion.

Though kind-hearted, and a good generous fellow, Ralph had not any great depth of feeling, and was too much spoiled by his mother to let anything distress him long. He admired Gertrude, and loved her as a sister now, as he had done from the first; though, prompted by his

mother's admiration for her to try and gain a nearer place, he had actually for the time imagined himself very much in love. Ralph was young and impressionable, very much as Mr. Ward had described him,—ready to fall in love with every new face.

Gertrude, amused by Ralph's gay talk, and interested in hearing about Mr. Ward's former life, which held a great charm for her, enjoyed her ride thoroughly, as also the half hour she passed with Mrs. Livingston; but knowing it was near the children's dinner-hour, she shortened her visit and was soon in the saddle again.

Her horse, fretted by being kept waiting, and impatient with a different bit that Ralph had had put on him, so that Gertrude might guide him more easily, did not go as smoothly as he had done before, but was ready to start at the slightest provocation. Gertrude only laughed, however, and enjoyed the excitement of keeping him in.

She was holding the reins rather carelessly, as she was deep in some contest with Ralph, when a workman ran across the road with a bright tin kettle in his hand, which was enough to make the restive horse start. Feeling the reins loose, the animal went off on a hand-gallop, and Gertrude, finding it impossible to check him, the gallop soon changed into a run, and he tore along in his mad career, leaving poor Ralph frightened for her safety, and feeling himself of no use, as his horse could not keep up with hers.

They were only a little over a mile from Mr. Ward's house, and he trusted that she would be able to keep her saddle, and guide the horse so that he would not come in contact with anything

on the road. It was a sorry trust, and Ralph, as he labored far in the rear, blamed himself bitterly for not listening to Mr. Ward's advice.

Meanwhile, Mr. Ward, who was far from being satisfied of her safety, but who had been persuaded into letting her go, had been down to the gate several times to look for them. He was just returning once again when the clatter of a runaway horse's hoofs was heard, and he looked back, to see Gertrude coming on in her mad career,—too late to open the gate, for her horse came thundering up against it, and she was thrown violently off on one side of the road.

"Gertrude, my darling!" He knelt by her and raised her in his arms, dreading to know the truth. Breathless from her rapid passage through the air, and stunned by her fall, she was unable to speak, though not seriously hurt. "Gertrude, speak to me!" The tears rained from his eyes as he passionately kissed her pale lips.

"I am not hurt," she struggled to say as she put her head back on his shoulder; she did not feel quite herself yet, and did not care to change her position. She was perfectly conscious of all that went on around her, and the pleasure was very deep as she saw the passionate love written so plainly on his face.

"I am not much hurt, thank you, Mr. Ward," she at last was able to say, while she raised herself and tried to smooth her hair.

"Oh! Gertrude, my darling! You cannot know what I have suffered; I thought you would never speak again." He held her in a close embrace, while she, bewildered, and not able to resist, submitted passively.

"Gertrude." Ralph at last had reached her.

"I shall never forgive myself for my folly. Are you much hurt?"

"No, Ralph, I am dreadfully stunned and shaken, but no bones are broken." She tried to stand, but was much too dizzy for that, and would have fallen if Mr. Ward had not caught her.

"You cannot walk, Miss Lyle, that is impossible. Ralph, take care of the horses." Lightly and easily, very much as though she were a child, he carried her to the house; while Gertrude, blushing and confused, protested. Poor Ralph, feeling very guilty and uncomfortable, followed, leading the quieted horse.

All that day Gertrude lay on a lounge in Miss Ward's room, petted and made much of by her. She was very stiff and sore from her bruises, but otherwise unhurt. Mr. Ward had been watching for an opportunity to speak to her, and seeing his sister called away by visitors, he went to her room. Gertrude was looking very lovely, reclining on the lounge, half buried in the shawls with which Miss Ward had almost smothered her. Her bright sunny hair was all loosened as he liked to see it, and fell over her pillow as she lay there trying to read a new novel Miss Ward had given her.

"I did not knock, Gertrude, for I knew you would not let me come in, and I have wanted to see you so much all day, darling." He took her small hand in his own as he spoke. "You already know my secret, but I must have some answer. Gertrude, can you love me? Will you be my wife?" He watched her face eagerly.

She had dreaded this interview very much,

and would have escaped it if she could; but it was impossible to prevent it, and she must give her answer.

"You have been very kind to me, Mr. Ward;" and the eyes were full of tears she raised to his face. "I can never repay your kindness."

"You do not love me, Gertrude?"

"Not that, Mr. Ward!" Not wishing to hurt his pride, and thinking more of him than herself, she added, "I love you more than I can love any one, but I could never be your wife. Do you not know I am Gertrude Lyle, your governess?" For a moment her eyes sparkled saucily. "I am not even Gertrude Lyle, and I cannot tell you who I am; so we must never think of being more to each other than we are at present."

"But, Gertrude, what can you mean? You say you love me, and still will not trust me. I cannot believe in such love." He passionately pushed her hand from him, only to take it the next moment.

"It is true, Mr. Ward." She sadly shook her head. "I would if I could, but I cannot. I can tell my secret to no one but my husband—that is, if he loved me enough to trust me, and that you can never do, for you would never love a woman enough to trust her for love only, but must know all about her."

"It is not that, Gertrude; you don't know the history of my past life, or you would not taunt me. The woman I marry must have perfect confidence in me." He looked reproachfully in her face.

"I am very sorry, Mr. Ward;" and the tears ran down her cheeks on seeing his pained face.

"I should never have stayed here when I found you were not satisfied in not knowing my secret, but I hoped——"

Just then Miss Ward came in, and lectured her brother on disturbing her patient, so we are not destined to know what Gertrude hoped. Poor Miss Ward! it was always her fate to be wrong in place, as she said, and certainly she was in the wrong place that time.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THAT same evening, Gertrude went to her room earlier than usual. She was not so ill as Miss Ward was trying to persuade her to consider herself, but shaken, and feeling sore and bruised from her fall, and wanting to be alone to think, she excused herself, and left the brother and sister together.

Mr. Ward was provoked at his sister for coming in at such an inopportune moment, and provoked with Gertrude for not having given him her confidence; he had waited, and hoped for an opportunity of speaking to her again, but all his schemes were marred by his sister, who was doing her best to bring them together.

So the brother and sister were left to spend their evening together, Mr. Ward being in a very unamiable state of mind, and he tried to fix his attention on his paper with but little success.

Mr. Ward always had a paper when with his sister, as it excused inattention, and she was often very tiresome.

Miss Ward was busy working at one side of the table and trying to be contented, but every now and then raising her eyes to the opposite newspaper, wondering when her brother would exhaust it. But as the paper was laid down, and a fresh one taken up, she lost all patience. She felt in a talkative mood, and could not be quiet any longer.

"What is the news this evening, John?" It was her question regularly every evening, as she wished to be companionable, though every one knew that she did not care at all for the paper except the portion devoted to the deaths and marriages. But for all that, the poor little woman winked her eyes very hard, and tried to look interested as she asked the question; while she would not have cared if the Prussians had eaten up the Austrians, and Italy had sunk forever into the Mediterranean Sea.

"Nothing at all, Margaret." He studied the columns more closely while he held the paper nearer his face as a barrier against interruption.

"Any little part you are interested in, I would like very much to hear, dear," she again interrupted.

"You know very well, Margaret, if there is anything I dislike it is reading aloud." Mr. Ward again resumed his paper. While his sister sighed and kindly concluded that John was not well, for he often read aloud to her, and did not appear to dislike it as much as he said. Miss Ward had a great idea of the responsibilities that fall to the male sex, and particularly to her brother, so she was never out of temper with him.

"Don't you think Gertrude is a very dear girl?" Miss Ward had called her Gertrude all day since her accident, and liked it so much that she had not ceased doing so. "She is very beautiful, John."

"Miss Lyle is beautiful, no doubt; but, Margaret, I do wish you would let me read my paper in peace." And again there was a silence; but Miss Ward's mind was too busy for it to last

long, and her next question was murmured more to herself than addressed to her brother, for she was afraid of another rebuff.

"Gertrude is very lovely, and the children are so fond of her. I wonder if she likes Ralph?" The last question was put as a feeler, but Mr. Ward paid no attention.

"Brother!" again she interrupted. "Do you think Gertrude likes Ralph?"

"Why not, Margaret?" Mr. Ward, seeing that her questions had some definite end, resigned himself to his fate, trusting to be released the sooner. "Of course she likes Ralph."

"But seriously, I mean, brother——"

"Of course, Margaret. I don't think Miss Lyle has much levity about her."

"You will never understand me, John." Miss Ward sighed. "You know very well what I mean."

"No; I am not sufficiently bright to solve your thoughts. If you have anything to say, do speak plainly."

"Well, then, John,"—Miss Ward was provoked,—"do you think Gertrude is in love with Ralph?"

"You had better ask her if you want to know. She, no doubt, knows better than I do."

"But, John; what would we do if Gertrude left us? We would never find any one who understood the children as well, and, poor little things, it would almost break their hearts."

"I don't see any immediate prospect of losing Miss Lyle, Margaret, and I can hardly understand why you are so anxious on the subject. Has she said anything?"

"No; but we must think sometimes, and I thought——"

"I wish you would not think quite so much, Margaret; it would save a great deal of trouble."

"But, brother, don't you think it would be nice to have Gertrude with us always?—on the children's account you know."

"Yes; very nice, Margaret." And Mr. Ward sighed.

"I love her very much, dear, more than I ever loved dear Lucy even. And though she is the governess, still she is a lady. John dear,"—she paused, troubled, thinking he might assist her,—“don't you like Gertrude?"

"Very much, Margaret." Mr. Ward looked amused in despite of his trouble, as he saw the care his sister was taking to conceal the little mystery she was making so very plain.

"I should like to see you happy before I died, and Gertrude is very lovely." Miss Ward watched her brother anxiously.

"In short, you want me to make love to Miss Lyle, instead of to Miss Cecil, on the children's account?"

"Yes, John." Her face was very serious. "I think she would make you and the children happy."

"Are there any more of your friends you would like me to marry, Margaret, as a convenient family arrangement? May be we might move to Utah, and I could turn Mormon to suit you." Mr. Ward looked quite serious.

"Oh, brother! why will you never see what I mean. Gertrude is very lovely, I am sure, and if you would only ask her to—to be your wife——"

"What would you say if I told you I had already asked Miss Lyle that question?"

"When? When, John?" His sister was so delighted, that she put down her work and listened for more. "It was this afternoon! I knew it! You sly boy!" Miss Ward, in delight, rubbed her hands softly together.

"Yes, Margaret, this afternoon. But you seem very confident of the result." He bit his lip in vexation. "Miss Lyle does not want to be married, and rejected your brother."

"John, what can you mean? Don't play with me, dear, it is too serious a subject to jest on." She eagerly took his hand.

"It is the truth, Margaret; ask Miss Lyle herself, if you are not satisfied."

"Miss Lyle reject you? You are jesting, John! It is some mistake! I cannot believe it!" She incredulously shook her head. "You have not explained your meaning, and have been abrupt. I know. The poor little thing is frightened. No doubt, it will be all right. Don't be unhappy, dear. I know it will!"

"I hope so, Margaret." He was very serious as he took her hand.

"Never fear, brother, I will explain it all to her." But Mr. Ward sternly interrupted her.

"You do not know what you say, Margaret. I will have no interference. I can manage my affairs best myself."

"No doubt, John dear, and it will be all right." Thinking to encourage him. "I have no idea that Gertrude cares for Ralph."

"Neither have I, sister, as she refused him a long time ago."

"You are dreaming, John!" She raised her eyes to his in consternation. "You forget Miss Lyle is only our governess—what can you mean?"

"It may appear strange, Margaret, when we are both so attractive. Miss Lyle is hard to please, according to your ideas. But where is your pride? You would have me marry a governess."

"What is pride, brother, when happiness is concerned?" She anxiously watched him with her eyes full of tears.

"But she is not even Gertrude Lyle, and she will not say who she is. You would not have me marry a stranger you know nothing of?"

"If I loved her, I would trust her, John. Miss Lyle has lived with us long enough to merit all confidence."

"You are a silly, dreaming little woman." He held the silly little woman to him closely, and kissed her fondly.

"Oh, woman! how much more deeply versed in the language of the heart than man! Go to bed, Margaret, and forget your silly dreams." Mr. Ward kissed his sister again good night as he left her.

Miss Ward sat and pondered the new problem of her brother's rejection, but, as she said before, it was all a mistake, and she thought the more how she would bring the two together without offending or disobeying her brother. She resolved in the end, as she always did, that he knew best, and she could only let things take their course, trusting in the future. Gertrude, in her own room, dreamed of the new happiness of knowing her love returned. She understood the sacrifice he would have to make of his pride for her sake, and her hope was that he loved her so dearly it would be easy to do it. She thought, far into the night, of her new happiness in hav-

ing her love returned, and dreamed many bright, waking dreams which, considering the excitement of the day, was a poor way of finding rest.

The happiness in knowing she was loved was sufficient for the present, though her secret weighed heavily, and she longed to tell it. A happy smile played round her lips when she thought—"If he only loved me for myself alone, not knowing who I was, or anything about me, how truly noble it would be, and how much more dearly I would love him for it." Gertrude, who was young and romantic, decided she would not have it any different, but would rather trust all to his love for her, and hold no merit but in herself.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE next day, Gertrude, being far from well, did not leave her room; she felt stiff and aching, and found it difficult to move in consequence of her fall. She was very glad of some excuse to be alone to think; so the children were carefully excluded from her room by their aunt, as she was afraid of their troubling her, and Gertrude was growing very dear to Miss Ward.

The day was passed by her alone, except for Miss Ward's coming in at intervals with kind inquiries for her welfare. Each time her eyes were raised pleadingly to Gertrude's, as she was a bad dissembler, and could not keep her secret; so she fondly lingered over her task while she arranged her pillows, or did something for her comfort. Once or twice Gertrude was on the point of questioning her as she thanked her for her kindness, but something held her back. But at last, as Miss Ward still went on in her petting and sighing, she could no longer stand it, for her curiosity was fully aroused.

"Miss Ward,"—Gertrude detained her hand,—
"are you sick, or is anything the matter?"

"No, dear, nothing." Miss Ward sighed.

"Have you one of your bad headaches, Miss Ward?"

"No, dear." She shook her head and sighed more deeply, wishing her own head had to suffer instead of her brother's heart.

"Is anything the matter with the servants, or are the children troublesome? Poor little things! do let them come to me."

"No, Gertrude, Rosa and Vannino are both very good, and nothing is wrong. John has had some trouble, and is not quite happy." Miss Ward smoothed the young girl's hair as she sighed again, though she noticed with pleasure the warm blush that dyed her cheeks.

"Are you comfortable and happy, Gertrude?"

"Very comfortable and very happy, thank you, Miss Ward."

"Young people are often thoughtless, but I thought better of you, Gertrude." She left off smoothing her hair, and turned her head away from her.

"I hope I am not thoughtless, Miss Ward; but I would be very ungrateful if your kindness did not make me happy."

"I don't see how you can talk so, Gertrude, when John——" She checked herself, for she knew she was venturing on forbidden ground.

"Is not Mr. Ward well?" A mischievous smile played round Gertrude's lips, as she understood Miss Ward's trouble, and could not help rejoicing in her new happiness.

"My brother is very well, thank you, Miss Lyle." Miss Ward drew herself up stiffly, and then wanting sympathy very much, and looking to Gertrude for it, she blurted out: "You don't know what a hard life I have had, Miss Lyle. I love my brother more than anything on earth, and to see his whole life wrecked, is misery. He was such a beautiful boy, and I was so proud of him till he met that woman." Her eyes filled with tears, while Gertrude took her hand sympathizingly in her own.

"I know, Miss Ward. Mrs. Livingston told me."

"But you do not know how I built all my hopes on him, and then to find my love was nothing to him—it was very hard." The tears trickled slowly down her cheeks. "I lived alone for seven years, only waiting for his return. I learned even to love his wife for his sake. Poor fellow! he was so happy at first, and wrote me such loving letters; but it was only for a little while. I longed so much to see him, but I had to wait; and his letters grew cold and severe, as he had lost hope in all. I dreaded I hardly knew what, long before the sad news came, and then I almost felt thankful to be relieved from my suspense. When I knew at last I should again see him, I cannot tell you how happy and grateful I was; but when he came, how could I be thankful in seeing him so different? He was cold and stern, and even suspicious of me; he had been deceived, and could trust no one." She laid her head on Gertrude's shoulder, who was too much moved by her distress to interrupt her. "Then I could not manage the children, and though I longed for their love, I could not gain it, as I did not understand them. John was much away from home, and was so moody when with me, I often dreaded having him, as I could not bear to see him suffer. Every chance word stung him, for he was proud, and dreaded the exposure. Then at last the day came when he was released. Poor fellow! how happy he was! He was full of softened thoughts of his wife then, and blamed himself deeply, but the feeling of freedom overpowered all.

"He soon went back on the same old path.

Then I brought Lucy Cecil here, hoping that he might be happy again; but dear Lucy is not what she used to be. Then there was a great change in him; he had learned to love his children, and grew kinder and softer with me, and I know I often trouble him sadly. I thought it strange he cared so much for the children, as it is not his way; but I attributed it all to them, and I never knew the truth till last evening. Oh, Gertrude!"—Miss Ward paused in consternation—"I was not to say one word—I promised. I am afraid I have been very wrong. You won't tell John, dear, or let him know? I am afraid he will never forgive me. Oh dear, dear, how unfortunate! I always am wrong."

Gertrude, who was trying very hard to be serious, so as not to offend Miss Ward, could not help laughing heartily.

"But, Gertrude, you won't tell John?"

"No, Miss Ward; I am not in the habit of discussing such things, if Mr. Ward is." She felt provoked that Mr. Ward could have talked over with his sister that which she considered sacred, and wondered at the little delicacy he had shown.

"There, Gertrude, I knew it! I am always so unfortunate when I intend all for the best. What will John say to me?"

"Miss Ward, it was not your fault; but I always thought such things were not meant for discussion, and I think Mr. Ward had little to talk about——"

"But he did not tell me, Gertrude. I guessed it, and worried the truth out of him. Oh, I wish I had not." Miss Ward looked the picture of despair. "He was so unhappy, and loves you so

much, you would not be unkind to him! Poor boy, he has had such a hard life!"

Gertrude could not help smiling again at the title of boy as applied to Mr. Ward by his mite of a sister. The patronizing and petting term was so amusing as coming from her to that six feet of humanity.

"I don't see how you can laugh, Gertrude, at such a serious subject. I am sorry I took the trouble of talking to you. I would not have done it if I had had any sense. I always do get myself in trouble, and now I suppose you will go and tell John, and he will never forgive me." Gertrude took her hand caressingly.

"I won't tell Mr. Ward, and you have done no harm, Miss Ward. I only thought your brother had shown very little delicacy, that was all."

"But John did not," Miss Ward eagerly interrupted. "I worried him so, and then I guessed it. I can never bear to see him unhappy. You will love him and make him happy, won't you, Gertrude?" Miss Ward asked the question as though pleading for some new plaything for her baby brother.

"I can't, Miss Ward—you know I am only the governess," Gertrude added wickedly.

"Gertrude, Gertrude, how can you be so unkind? You know John does not care for that."

"Yes—but, Miss Ward, he does not know who I am, and I cannot tell him."

"Would not you tell him at all?"

"No, Miss Ward." Gertrude was sadly troubled.

"But you would tell *me*, dear?" She laid her hand on Gertrude's shoulder coaxingly.

"I could not, Miss Ward, though I would like to do so." She sadly shook her head.

"But never, Gertrude?"

"Not for a long time."

"But would you tell no one?"

"I might tell my husband, if he trusted me enough not to know my secret before." And blushing painfully, her eyes sought the carpet.

"Dear! dear!" Miss Ward shook her head as a new thought struck her. Gertrude might see some one else to fall in love with; and what would poor John and the children do? "You are so perverse. I do wish you were not so pretty."

"I am sorry I am perverse; but I can't say I would like to be ugly, even to please you, Miss Ward." She laughed saucily.

"Do you like John, Gertrude?" The question was put rather abruptly, as Miss Ward, in her excitement and worry, was forgetting all the rules of sentiment. She was presenting the tender passion evidently as a pill to be swallowed. "Do you love John?" The question was again reiterated as the young girl did not answer, but could not help smiling at her ridiculous position, while the crimson tide again dyed her face.

"Oh, Gertrude! if you only knew how you tried me, dear." The tears trickled down her cheeks, while Gertrude nestled closely to her, and putting her head on her shoulder, cried too. "Do you love John?"

"Yes, Miss Ward." The words were so low she could hardly hear them; but she was satisfied.

"Then why, dear, are you so perverse?"

"I am not perverse, Miss Ward; but I cannot tell my secret."

"But, Gertrude, you don't know what John's life has been; you must consider that, and be thoughtful."

"I know he has had a great deal to make him suspicious; but I cannot help it."

"You won't tell him? You don't love him!"

"Yes I do; but love is not perfect without trust. Mr. Ward should trust me."

"So he should, dear." Miss Ward, who was full of chivalrous ideas of the tender passion, though long past the age of romance, looked relieved.

"But John is very firm, dear,"—she could not bring herself to say stubborn,—“and you may like some one better if you wait so long.”

"That is true, Miss Ward." Gertrude laughed gayly; Miss Ward had such a business-like way of arranging things.

"I will tell John what you say, Gertrude." Miss Ward was again forgetting that she had promised her brother not to speak to Gertrude, and how she had enjoined secrecy on the young girl.

"You must not tell him anything," Gertrude interrupted, as she drew up her slight form. "Such things would come best from Mr. Ward himself; he told me he could not trust me, and that is enough."

"He did not really say that, Gertrude dear?"

"No; not exactly—but he implied it."

"I knew it!" Miss Ward shook her head triumphantly. "It will all be right; you are dear good children, but you give me a great deal of trouble." She kissed her warmly.

"You must not say anything to Mr. Ward, remember, Miss Ward. I would be very angry."

Miss Ward shook her head; she would not make any more rash promises this time, and it remained for her to bring the two young people together.

"You are very good and kind, Miss Ward." The grateful tears filled her eyes. "You would trust me, though you don't know who I am?"

"I know quite enough of your *troublesomeness* without wishing to know more." Miss Ward, thinking she had said something very good, kissed her again, and, smiling brightly, left the room. Gertrude was to be kept very quiet by Miss Ward's especial orders, and this is how she saw them carried out herself.

CHAPTER XXX.

"GERTRUDE, don't you intend coming down stairs to-day?" Miss Ward came into the nursery where Gertrude was sitting with Vannino in her arms.

"Not now, Miss Ward, thank you; Vannino is not well, and I promised not to leave him. I won't leave you, darling," as the child made some protest against his aunt's request.

"You don't think he need see the doctor, Gertrude?" Miss Ward, who was always alarmed at the slightest illness, looked at the child anxiously.

"No; I think he has taken cold, and is feverish, that is all. Vannino likes petting, and will be a good boy, and be all well to-morrow." She put his little hot hand to her face.

"I can manage to send, if you think it is necessary, Gertrude."

"No, Miss Ward, I don't think it is." Knowing the doctor lived four miles distant, and thinking the child did not need any especial care, she added: "I will try and keep him quiet, and I think if I could get him to sleep he would be better."

For above an hour, Gertrude held him in her arms, going over her stories till she was quite tired out. The little fellow was cross and restless, and pleaded for more stories; and the bright

eyes that she hoped to lull into sleep, did not give much promise of fulfilling her wishes. The fever was increasing, and Gertrude, growing alarmed, called Ann, and left the child with her while she went down stairs to see Miss Ward.

"Miss Ward, I am afraid we had better have the doctor; Vannino is decidedly worse, and I do not know what to do for him; I cannot get him to sleep."

"Certainly, Gertrude! You don't think, dear, there is anything much the matter?"

"No, he has only taken a heavy cold; but he is feverish, and more restless than he was."

The doctor came and pronounced Vannino's sickness scarlet fever, though he thought he would have it lightly. The child was peevish and cross, and fretted if Gertrude left the room an instant, and was only perfectly comfortable when she was with him. Rosa was kept from the room for fear of infection, and the boy pined sadly for his sister. Mr. Ward shared Gertrude's labors with her, and relieved her more than any one else—as his father, after Gertrude, had the next place in the child's affections. He was kind and anxious, disturbed that she should be so constantly confined, and did all he could to lighten her cares; but no allusion was made to what had happened before Vannino's sickness.

Gertrude appeared more attractive in the sick-room than he had ever known her; always cheerful, and never tired; exerting all her arts to please and amuse the boy; doing everything so daintily and neatly that it was a pleasure to see her. Mr. Ward, if possible, felt more in love than ever, and more bent on gaining a return. She appeared timid when he approached her,

and avoided being alone with him as much as possible, so there was little chance of their arriving at a better understanding, for the present at least.

As Vannino grew stronger, Rosa sickened of the same disease, notwithstanding their care. She had taken it much more heavily than her brother, and gave them great cause for anxiety. She was too sick and miserable to be cross and irritable, as Vannino had been; but though she did not beg Gertrude to stay with her, there was a pleading look in her large dark eyes when she left the room, and a new brightness on her return, that fully repaid her, but kept her a prisoner.

No one could arrange her pillows as Miss Lyle did. The medicine was not nearly as hard to take when she gave it to her, and everything was better done that she did for her. She, like Vannino, clung to her father, after Gertrude. Miss Ward was too restless and nervous to be a good nurse, and could not understand their various wants, but only troubled them by asking questions. She was so anxious to do something, and so miserable when she felt her own helplessness, that it was pitiable to see her.

Rosa's sickness coming so soon after her brother's was a heavy strain on Gertrude; for, notwithstanding her love for Vannino, the fever rendered the child so fretful as sorely to try her patience.

Mr. Ward did all he could to relieve her, and was equally as constant in his attendance on Rosa, for the child was very ill and required all their care. Sometimes, when slightly delirious, she would go over her past life, and Mr. Ward

learned to look to Gertrude for sympathy, as he listened to the little one's uneasy murmurings. In her dreams she was with her mother, for her affections were very deep, and she had not forgotten; but Gertrude's name was strangely woven in with her dreams, the child unconsciously blending the young girl's character with her past life.

All that was disagreeable in connection with her early life was associated with Marietta—and her mother was good, beautiful, and kind—like Miss Lyle. She evidently loved her ideal mother through her love for Gertrude, or Gertrude and her mother were one; the only thing she remembered and cherished was the signora's great beauty; but the loving kindness and care, of which she spoke, were all Gertrude's.

It was a great trial to both listeners, reading and understanding all as perfectly as they did. Gertrude felt embarrassed and troubled at Mr. Ward's grief, and often longed for the child to cease her murmurings; while Mr. Ward, pained and humbled that Gertrude should so plainly see and realize his past folly, felt equally as anxious that Rosa should cease her plaint. The little girl's constant coupling and blending of her name with his in that strange way gave him deep pleasure, but also gave him pain when he watched Gertrude too closely, seeing her uneasy face and evident disapproval. He could not tell that all her care and thought was to save him sorrow, and that she was not thinking of herself. He had not had any opportunity of getting an explanation from her, she had kept herself so studiously out of his way; and the children's illness had come so soon after her own accident, that

all their thoughts and care had been given to them.

Mrs. Livingston and Ralph had both been very kind in being with Miss Ward; they could not relieve Gertrude, for the doctor advised perfect quiet, and strangers would only excite Rosa and make her task more difficult. Since the child was so much worse, Gertrude seldom left her except for a few moments at a time.

Mr. Ward did his best,—awkwardly, as men generally; so nearly all the weight of care and nursing fell on her shoulders. Gertrude, however, stood it bravely, and found great comfort in having him so constantly with her. All the constraint she had felt, after his avowal, was forgotten in her anxiety, and their hearts were drawn very closely together in their common trouble; his character shone forth in its best light, and no one could now doubt his love for his little girl.

Rosa had been sick for four days, and at last the weary watchers could see an improvement; the fever had left her, but she was sadly worn and changed. The little rosy face was thin and pinched, and her heavy jetty curls, in which Gertrude had taken so much pride, had all been sacrificed.

The fifth day, the doctor pronounced her decidedly better, and from that time, each day saw a great improvement.

"We owe it all to you, Miss Lyle," Mr. Ward often said, as Rosa, now beginning to take an interest in what went on around her, clung more closely to her kind nurse. It had been a great relief when Rosa was pronounced out of danger. Gertrude, though looking thin and pale,

had kept up wonderfully. She was an untiring story-teller, and exerted herself to the utmost to keep the child quiet.

Mrs. Livingston had been waiting impatiently for the time when she could carry off both Rosa and her nurse, as she had firm faith that a change of scene would effect a complete cure. Each day Rosa grew stronger, and at last one warm February day the doctor gave his consent that if her father were willing, both nurse and patient should go and stay a few days with Mrs. Livingston. Gertrude, since their cause for anxiety was gone, had fallen back into her old place with Mr. Ward. She avoided him in every way, so that he had no opportunity, if he had wished it, of speaking to her.

It was a mild, sunny day that Rosa, wrapped up warmly in thick shawls, and shut in the close carriage, left home for Mrs. Livingston's. Her father went with them to see that they were well cared for, and was constant in his care and attention. Rosa, delighted at being released from her confinement, and looking forward with great pleasure to her visit, was talking and laughing merrily as she held Gertrude's hand and appealed to her for sympathy. Gertrude was quiet and constrained, as was usual with her when with Mr. Ward, though trying to enter into the child's pleasure; and Mr. Ward was quiet and depressed too, misconstruing her avoidance of him.

"Papa,"—Rosa gazed up into his face, and seeing he did not look as happy as she did, and thinking the trouble lay with herself—"you will come and see us, won't you, and bring Vannino?"

"Yes, Rosa. And my little girl must hurry

and be well soon, as I will want her home again."

"I do wish you were going too! You won't be lonely, papa? We won't be gone long." Rosa smoothed down her dress with a very important air, which made her father laugh.

"We will get along famously without you—never fear. Aunt Margaret and I will be delighted to have a quiet house." He pinched her cheek.

"Is that so, papa?" She raised her large dark eyes to his face. "I have been a great bother, but any way you won't be glad to be rid of Miss Lyle." Rosa appeared better satisfied as she looked at Gertrude, thinking she was punishing him for his faithlessness.

"No, we will be very sorry to lose Miss Lyle." Mr. Ward tried to make Gertrude feel more at her ease, as he watched her opposite him looking out of the window, and not appearing to hear what they were talking about.

"You won't see Miss Lyle till you see me, so you will *have* to be glad, papa, won't you?" Rosa took his hand in hers and raised it caressingly to her cheek. She had learned to love her father very dearly, and was naturally demonstrative.

Gertrude had been embarrassed and uncomfortable with Mr. Ward ever since Rosa's recovery. She thought she had gone too far, and told the secrets of her heart too plainly; she was always dreading a return to the same subject, and avoided him as much as possible. Then she was tried by her long confinement, and felt nervous, so was not her bright, cheery self; and the change to Mrs. Livingston's was looked forward

to as a great relief. She wanted time to think and to decide what she would do. Evidently she could no longer stay with the Wards on the same terms as they were at present. Mr. Ward, meanwhile, seeing she did not intend speaking to him unless directly addressed, determined to make an effort.

"Miss Lyle, you had a weary time taking care of this troublesome little girl, and must do your best to get back your roses. If I come for you, will you ride with me? I think it would do you more good than anything else." He wanted to put her at her ease with him, but did not know that this was the worst way of doing so, as she dreaded being alone with him, but did not like to refuse his kindness, fearing that he might feel hurt.

"I should think you would hardly be willing to take the trouble with me, I so disgraced Ralph's and your teaching the last day I was out."

"Ralph and I both know it was not your fault. That horse is not to be trusted, and if I were Ralph I would get rid of him. He rides too little ever to break him in. But will you go, Miss Lyle?"

"Yes, I should like it very much." The untruth was easily told, for politeness' sake, as it was just exactly what she cared least for doing.

"Well, then, I will come for you to-morrow." He named an hour, and then, seeing they were in sight of the house, busied himself with wrapping up Rosa more warmly before the carriage door should be opened.

"You will smother me, papa. Oh, don't!" Rosa laughed as her father awkwardly wrapped

her large shawl round her head, and Gertrude had to come to her assistance.

"Thank you, Miss Lyle! We can't do anything without Miss Lyle, you see, Rosa." He raised her securely in his arms. "Why, Rosa, those curls must have weighed very heavy, for you are nothing at all to carry now."

"But I have been very sick, papa."

"Yes. But we did not leave anything behind but the curls." So, laughing and teasing her, Rosa was carried into the house before Gertrude had fairly collected her wrappings, and Mr. Ward was back again to assist her.

He was very kind, and evidently wished any awkwardness forgotten; so Gertrude could not help smiling, and forgetting the little stiffness that remained.

"Won't you come in, Mr. Ward?" Gertrude thanked him as he transferred her shawls to a neighboring chair.

"Not now, Miss Lyle. I will come to-morrow! Margaret will be anxious to know you arrived safely, and Mrs. Livingston is not down stairs, so I will not disturb her." He closed the door for her, while Gertrude stood at the window watching him. It was a fine, manly, noble face that was turned to throw a kiss to Rosa as the carriage drove off, for Rosa was watching too.

"Papa is very handsome, Miss Lyle! It don't look a bit nice out of doors any more." Rosa sighed deeply as she turned away disgusted. Gertrude found herself unconsciously echoing the child's sigh. She was uneasy when with him, but still more troubled when she saw him go. She, too, turned away from the window, as she decided it did not look nearly as pleasant out of doors now that he was no longer there.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"GERTRUDE dear! why did you let Mr. Ward go?" Mrs. Livingston kissed Gertrude and Rosa warmly.

"Papa is quite busy, Mrs. Livingston." Rosa, who evidently thought herself the heroine of the party, made haste to answer. "He only came to take care of us, didn't he, Miss Lyle?"

"Mr. Ward did not want to disturb you, as he had no time to stay; and he knew Miss Ward would be anxious to know that we arrived safely. He is coming to-morrow to take me out riding, and will stay longer then."

"I have been very busy up in my store-room, so did not hear you when you came. How much better Rosa is looking!" Mrs. Livingston took the little girl on her knee while she helped to undo some of her numerous wrappings.

"What will Vannino do, Rosa?"

"Papa said he might bring him some day if he were good. But Vannino must learn to be a man, and not be so petted." Rosa, who had been praised for being much better than her brother during her sickness, smiled serenely, conscious that she merited all commendation. "Was not it too bad about my curls, Mrs. Livingston? Papa wants to have me shaved." And Rosa felt her short locks ruefully, while Mrs. Livingston laughed. "Miss Lyle does not want it

done, so it won't be, for papa always does what Miss Lyle says." Rosa, who was fond of making malapropos speeches, had no mercy on Gertrude's blushing face.

"That would be too bad, Rosa!" Mrs. Livingston smoothed down the short curls. "Papa would not be so cruel?"

"Yes, he had quite set his mind on making me a fright, if Miss Lyle had let him." Rosa laughed as she drew a piece of paper out of her pocket on which her father had been amusing himself by drawing enormously large, ruffled caps for her edification.

"Miss Lyle looks almost as pale as you do, Rosa. But come up stairs and take off your things. I am so glad to have you again, dear!" Mrs. Livingston put her arm round Gertrude's waist while she kissed her warmly. "I expect Ralph home to dinner. You know he went to New York yesterday; he will be quite delighted to find you here."

It was a great improvement and relief—the change of scene; and Gertrude, who had been shut up in the sick-room so long, fully appreciated it, and began to feel better already. Her bright, pleasant room was just as she had left it when on her last visit, and Mrs. Livingston was so truly all that a friend should be, that her cheering influence was soon manifested. Independently of Gertrude's beauty and winning manner, there was a strange charm that had drawn Mrs. Livingston to her from the first time of seeing her. Sometimes she would watch her, bewildered and uneasy, feeling as though she had met her before, and irresistibly attracted by something in her face. But Mrs. Livingston was a practical woman, and

had so often been out of patience with Miss Ward and her fancies, that she checked any such feeling in herself, and attributed Gertrude's attraction for her simply to her own merits, which certainly were sufficient reason for loving her. And then she was nearly exactly the same age as the daughter she had lost, which was another great charm.

Her scheme as regarded Gertrude and Ralph did not appear as though it were destined to succeed. They knew each other entirely too well to satisfy her, and she did not like the brotherly and sisterly intercourse that had been established between them. But, like a sensible woman as she was, she, unlike Miss Ward, left the chief actors in the scheme unmolested, knowing that if not brought together by chance there was little hope of her own efforts being of any avail.

Gertrude and Rosa had a very busy and merry time during their stay. Uncle Ralph had brought such wonderful toys and puzzles from New York, that Rosa was quite overwhelmed by her numerous treasures. Uncle Ralph, too, was an untiring play-fellow, and happy in Gertrude's society, and not having anything of importance to attend to, he gave himself up entirely to Rosa's requirements, and sometimes would pass hours seated on the floor making and unmaking puzzles, and building the most wonderful castles out of blocks.

Ralph was good and untiring always; and Gertrude often would wonder at herself, in contrasting the two men's characters, that she did not admire Ralph's sunny temperament better than Mr. Ward's. Ralph was provokingly good-tempered: nothing put him out, and he was never tired or out of humor; it was impossible to

ruffle the calm of his disposition. He was one of those men who you never could imagine would cherish a life-long sorrow as Mr. Ward would have done. He fell in and out of love fifty times, as had been proved in Gertrude's case. He had had a very easy life, and though it had not spoiled him or made him selfish, I don't think all sunshine is good for any one.

These petty, worrying, daily cares; the foolishness or injustice of a parent will often fret and unnerve one's disposition, and destroy all that is beautiful in it. But any heavy sorrow frequently steadies, and strengthens, and brings out all the latent character there hidden. There are some natures very much of the butterfly order, who go through the world lightly and easily, sipping the sweet from each flower, without thinking anything of the future or giving any thought of return, and such was Ralph's character. He had not any great depth or settled rule of action; but was guided by impulse and what was pleasant, without any deeper motive power.

He pretended to be a farmer; but the farm was attended to by fits and starts, and was not on the same model as Mr. Ward's. Ralph would go through life without any decided mark for good or evil; and though such natures are spared much suffering, I do not think on the whole they are to be either admired or envied. He was a good son, having had such a sensible mother; but woe betide him if his mother had been in character like Miss Ward! his life would have been utterly wrecked,—most probably taking refuge in dissipation away from his home, as he depended entirely for his happiness on those around him.

Mr. Ward, on the contrary, though rough and

unamiable when fretted by his sister, had been strengthened by his trouble. He was a man who you found had a settled purpose in life; and Gertrude had learned to prize his rare smiles in contrast with his serious moods. She had taken several rides with him during her stay with the Livingstons, and he had been almost as constant in his visits as Ralph. He was not a man to be carried away by impulse, or to do things at inappropriate times, so never thought of making love on horseback as Ralph might have done. Seeing Gertrude's timidity with him, he had fallen back into his old easy way of teasing Rosa, and talking to Mrs. Livingston till Gertrude was quite at her ease again. He had been a long time in making up his mind, and battling with his pride, but now that it was done there was no shadow of change or turning.

The visit of Gertrude and Rosa passed quickly and uneventually, and the week was gone almost before they realized it. We look in on her again at home, for Mr. Ward had brought them back that morning.

Five o'clock had been chimed by the silver-voiced timepiece, as the delicate gilt hands marked the hour on the smooth white disk. The short winter's day was over, and Gertrude stood, as on the first evening we made her acquaintance, looking up into the calm blue sky, as the moon, struggling with the parting day, burst forth in all its silvery radiance, and then was lost in the thick masses of cloud that obscured

its bright face. Aunt Margaret, napping by the fire, was the only other occupant of the room. The silence remained unbroken except by the ticking of the clock, and the crackling of the coal in the grate as it burned up brightly, or fell with a heavy thud through the bars down into its ashy bed.

Mr. Ward had been engaged in his study all day, and had come to spend the busy man's one idle moment with his family. It was too early for light, and too late for reading or work—that misty, dreamy stage between night and day—when we pause for communion with those we love.

Always thoughtful now, he trod lightly past his sister, seeing, though almost concealed by the curtains, the slight form of the young girl, as the eyes of love are always clear-sighted to behold the loved one. He stood beside her, but she did not notice him, so lost was she in reverie, as her pure face was raised to take in all the brightness of the heaven above and the earth below, lighted by its splendor. The young girl's lips slightly moved, and the beautiful words of the king of our poets were dropped slowly from her lips:

"The moon, and its broken reflection,
And its shadows, shall appear
As the symbol of love in heaven,
And its wavering image here."

The temptation was strong to take her in his arms and place that fair young head on his breast; there was something sad and listless in the girl's figure; the dreamy hour of twilight had brought its various thoughts to the sweet young face. She might be dreaming of her home, and those

she had loved, and the strong man longed to take her to his heart and unravel the tangled skein she was trying to disentangle.

"Gertrude!" So light was the touch it did not startle her, nor did the familiar name. "Have you no hope for me, darling? Wonderful and perfect little woman! do you know what you have done?" She looked startled in his face, though the sweet lips were mute. "You have given me back my faith and trust in all woman-kind! You have lifted the dark veil and given me hope again! Perfect charity has followed your great gifts! and will not my rich donor, my fairy godmother, add to all her gifts that last and most perfect—Herself?" The man, strangely moved and softened, held her little soft hand in his own.

"Mr. Ward,"—and the girl sadly shook her head,—*"I cannot; you could not love Gertrude Lyle, the governess!"* She looked in his face. *"But not even Gertrude Lyle! I am a stranger to you, and you could never know"*—she blushed deeply while she played nervously with one of the tassels of the curtains—*"till I was very sure and safe."* She bent her head lower as she breathed out the words rather than spoke them: *"Till I was your wife."*

"Gertrude, my own one! Even *that* I can give! Perfect faith, and unselfish love! My fairy godmother has freighted my bark more richly than you can imagine! But will she not add the crowning glory of all?" He looked eagerly into her troubled face. Not waiting for answer, with one arm round her, he drew her bowed head and troubled face down where he had longed to pillow it.

"God bless you, my own one!" He pressed his lips on her upturned face.

"But——"

"No buts, Gertrude. Fairy godmothers have no doubts, but give all royally, and so it shall be with mine."

"But, Mr. Ward,"—she released herself and looked up perplexed and but half satisfied in his face,—*"you know what your sister will say."*

"My sister already loves you, darling, and will be truly glad in my happiness."

"But, Mr. Ward,"—again she interrupted—*"I am Gertrude Lyle, your governess—not even Gertrude Lyle—and you cannot know who I am!"* She was sadly troubled.

"Listen, darling! Love would not be perfect and pure without its trust; it is one of its noblest attributes. It is more blessed to love and be deceived many times than to love coldly, for that is not love at all, and they who do so cannot realize the full blessedness of the word. It is the flower without its perfume—the fruit without its flavor. In religion, as in love, there must be perfect trust. Without it, it is only cold ritualism, and a jangling war of words—not the sweetness and perfect harmony, as it is and should be.

"Long years ago I loved, Gertrude. I built my whole life on an uncertainty, and was happy but for a time. I lost all my hope and trust, and became a boor." He felt the slight form wince, as she would fain have contradicted him. "Yes, Gertrude, I was a perfect boor. I had my softer moments, as all even of that kind have. There was an empty, aching void, and a longing for my lost faith and love that had been all my world. I went about the world laughing and

sneering at all; but when the laugh pealed most loudly on my lips, I was only crucifying my own spirit. I had dreamed such a brilliant dream, and cheated myself on for years, beating out the wings of my spirit like the poor moth scorched and singed through glorying in the brightness. I would rather break my heart at the outer bounds of that radiance than never see the light. There is something glorious in perfect confidence, love, and trust, which those who love alone know. Do you remember Holmes's song of 'The Voiceless,' who died with all their music in them, never seeing the light? There is something infinitely sad and beautiful in the poet's idea, as you and I well know." He smoothed down her wavy hair as she nestled closer at his side, content at last to have found her home. "Gertrude, do you remember a little handkerchief you bound my hand with that fatal day to my pride, but the joyful one for my life, when I brought you home with me? I kept it, darling." And the whole story was poured out as she looked saucily in his face. "It was to teach me a lesson of avoidance of your dear self, and I little dreamed then of the lesson I was really to learn, and learn so well, too." He laughed a low, happy laugh to himself; while, strangely touched and moved, the young girl held the hand that had been so torn that morning, and looked for the scar anxiously, almost expecting to find it there, and, like a child, disappointed in not doing so. "It is a pity that it got well so soon," as he too looked ruefully at his hand.

"The hand is not as true as the heart, for that still bears the wound, though there is not even a scar here." They both laughed as she turned

his hand more fully to the light, and shook her head and said:

"Not even the smallest scar to remind me! But you cannot know who I am." The secret appeared to trouble and distress her more than her happy lover.

"I know you are a witch and a fairy, and certainly that is enough for mortal man to know. I am content." There was infinite satisfaction in the words. "But how is it with my Gertrude? Are you happy?"

So in happy, loving talk, fully an hour passed. The fire was almost out, and the room was cold. But what recked they of heat or cold, though the work-day world must go on—though lovers dream and sigh? At last, as is usual, they were tumbled ruthlessly out of the clouds too richly freighted to hold them as they stood forgetfully dreaming on.

"Kit-choo! kit-choo! I am so cold,—and where is Gertrude?" Aunt Margaret looked round the room for her young companion. "Where can Gertrude be? It was unkind to leave me alone, and the fire almost out. How thoughtless the young always are! Ugh! I am perished." She peevishly took a survey of the room, thoroughly out of temper. "I know I shall have one of my old attacks, all through her carelessness. "Gertrude! Gertrude! Where can the girl have gone to?"

"Gertrude is here!" A laughing face was put out between the curtains, on which the flickering light of the grate still shone.

"And here am I, too." Her brother also made his appearance.

"Could neither of you see that the fire is almost out, and I am frozen?"

"I don't see more than the usual frostiness, Margaret." He laughed as he rang the bell.

The fire was replenished, but the lamp was not lighted, for the story could best be told in the dark. So, kissed and coaxed into good humor, Aunt Margaret listened while the old but ever new story was told, which, from the time of our first fathers, has been handed down by poet and author. Book after book is written, always on the same subject, one more leaf added to make the whole more perfect. The garland that never will be finished, the work never done; but each soul, as it passes on its way, will lend his or her aid to beautify and make more perfect the whole.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE story of a happy love is difficult in the telling, and not interesting to those not immediately concerned, so I intend skipping over the intermediate part of my book. The last three weeks of Gertrude's engagement were spent with Mrs. Livingston, and it is needless to say Mr. Ward's time was passed there almost entirely with her. There appeared to be a secret understanding between Gertrude, Ralph, and Mrs. Livingston, that gave them much deep pleasure; and as we would like to know the secret also, I will take up my pen again on the day of her marriage.

The wedding was a very quiet one—only the immediate connections of the two families, and the nearest and best known of the neighbors, were invited. Mrs. Livingston seemed strangely anxious to have all her relations present at the ceremony, and sent very pressing invitations to most of them. She insisted on presenting Gertrude with her wedding-dress, which, as she threatened it should be, was the most superb one that the resources of New York could furnish. Gertrude looked exquisitely lovely as she stood, crowned with orange blossoms and enveloped in clouds of point lace, beside her manly and happy bridegroom. Around her slender throat was clasped a necklace of large and perfect pearls, an

ornament which Mrs. Livingston examined with a meaning smile. The ceremony passed off as usual till the minister spoke the words: "Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?" when, to the surprise of all, Mrs. Livingston came forward, and it was from her hands that John Ward received his blushing bride.

"I am your wife now, truly, John? No one can take me away or have any claim on me any more?" Gertrude whispered, as the guests gathered round her to offer their congratulations.

"My own dear wife, truly, and forever. No one can take you away."

"Are you sure, John?—very, very sure?"

"Of course, little trembler. But——" The whispered conversation was interrupted by Mrs. Livingston, who, taking Gertrude's hand, turned to the assembled guests and said, in a clear, ringing voice:

"Ladies and gentlemen, allow me to present to you, in Mrs. Ward, my niece, Helen Livingston."

We pass over the scene that ensued—the surprise, the confusion, the kisses, and congratulations showered on Gertrude by her new-found relatives. Poor Miss Ward was dumb with amazement, and half wild to know all the whys and wherefores. And Mr. Ward was half disappointed at finding his heroic self-sacrifice turn out to be no sacrifice at all.

The guests had departed, and Gertrude had exchanged her bridal splendors for a more simple toilet. The whole party were assembled round

the fire in Mrs. Livingston's dressing-room, as she had insisted on Gertrude's telling her story in full before she quitted her.

"You have told me part, but not all, darling!" she said. "So allow me the privilege of a relative for once, and make myself disagreeable by detaining you till we have heard your history."

So Gertrude, seated by her husband, and one hand closely locked in his, commenced her narrative:

"I must begin by telling you, John, my mother was a New York belle and heiress, the beautiful Miss Van Suys. She died when I was but two years old; and my father, in the first excess of his grief, went abroad, taking me with him. He soon wearied of the care of so young a child, and placed me, young as I was, in a boarding-school in Paris. I was very happy there; my teachers were good and kind, and did their duty faithfully by the poor, forlorn little child intrusted to their care. Papa was very fond of me, and came often to see me, and bought me beautiful presents. He wrote to me constantly, too. I would like you to read some of his letters, John. He was a dear, kind father, and I loved him so dearly!" Her bright eyes filled with tears, but loving hands quickly brushed them away, and she continued:

"When I was about twelve years old my father married again. His second wife was a wealthy Southern widow, a Mrs. Sherman from Georgia, who owned a large plantation near Savannah. She was a coarsely handsome woman, artful and insinuating in her manners, and just the person to attract a gentle, listless, careless man like my father. She came to see me, and made many

professions of attachment; but soon after her marriage she induced my father to take up his residence in Florence, and from that time I saw him but seldom, though he wrote as constantly and as affectionately as ever. They often talked of my paying them a visit, but the time was never fixed, and I remained contentedly enough at school.

"The years passed away till I was seventeen. One day I was surprised by a visit from my father. He looked ill and harassed, and told me that he was on the eve of returning to the United States. Business matters he said required his presence there, and my step-mother was to accompany him. He gave me the address of his lawyer, and told me to write to him. As he kissed me good-by, I burst into a passion of tears, and clinging to his neck I begged him to take me with him. He soothed and caressed me, and said that he would soon send for me if he decided to remain in America. And then he was gone, and I never saw him again." Her voice trembled, but she controlled herself, and went bravely on.

"Three months after, I received the news of his death. My step-mother wrote to me, telling me my father's will appointed her my guardian, and that she wished me to join her in New York, specifying by what steamer I was to sail, and saying that she would be in New York waiting to receive me. I had no alternative but to submit, so my trunks were packed, and my passage taken, and I left the home where for so many years I had been very happy. When the steamer reached New York my step-mother was waiting for me at the wharf in a carriage; she told me

that we were to sail for Savannah that same evening. It was a bleak October day, and the thought of a summer climate was pleasant, though I would have liked to remain in New York for a few days to have formed the acquaintance of several of my relations who, though they had never seen me, had occasionally written a few lines, or sent some trifling token of regard.

"I had a brief interview with my father's lawyer, who had been on the watch for my arrival. He gave me a box containing my mother's jewels, which he told me were of immense value, and also a package of papers which comprised, among other things, my mother's diary, kept the last six months of her life.

"During this interview my step-mother acted very strangely; she talked incessantly, and interrupted Mr. Mason continually whenever he tried to talk to me. She complained of the lateness of the hour, and said that she feared we would not reach the Savannah steamer in time, so hurried me away.

"We reached home without any further adventures, and for a time I was very happy there. My step-mother was kind and indulgent, and I was too ignorant of all that appertained to southern life or southern manners to discover that we were placed in a strange, anomalous position. We never visited, or received any one; the plantation was neglected; the house going to ruin, and all the serviceable negroes were sold, and only the old and infirm were left. I soon became attached to one of these. Dear, kind, old Uncle Andy! How many pleasant hours we passed together, rambling about the desolate fields! He grew very fond of me, and made me

promise if I ever had a home I would do my best to get his freedom, and have him live with me. He was fervent in his praises of Mr. Sherman, his late master, but disliked my step-mother very much, though he was too politic to say much on the subject. 'Nuffin' but an overseer's da'ter,' he said once, sniffing scornfully. Then, too, he evidently both feared and disliked her only son, Calhoun Sherman, a young gentleman whom I had never seen, as he spent most of his time in New Orleans. 'He's a bad 'un, Miss Nelly, you be sure of dat,' old Andy said to me more than once.

"One evening, about six months after my arrival, my step-mother and myself were seated in the large room which was called by courtesy the library. She was busy with some plain sewing, and I was amusing myself by finishing some of my old school drawings. Suddenly wheels were heard grating on the gravel outside; a carriage stopped, and a rough looking man burst into the room.

"Well, mother, how are you?" He looked indifferently at her.

"Calhoun dear, is this you?" My step-mother rising, embraced the new-comer warmly.

"Yes, it's me, and cursed tired I am, to be sure. Where's Andy? Tell him to look to the horse, and bring me some whisky here at once. Why, who the d—l is that?" he continued, as his eyes fell on me.

"That is your sister Helen. Come here, Nell, and be introduced to your brother Calhoun."

"I approached reluctantly, as the young man before me was anything but prepossessing in appearance. He was a tall, heavily built, coarse

looking man, with a red-blotched face, sinister-looking, leering eyes, and thick lips only partially concealed by a bushy black moustache.

"So you're my sister?" he said, looking at me in a very offensive manner. 'You're too devilish pretty to call sister—but let's have a kiss anyhow, for the name's sake;' and he attempted to seize me.

"I eluded his grasp, and fled from the room to my own apartment. I carefully locked and barricaded the door, and then sat down to think. I was unspeakably disgusted when I thought of being exposed to the familiarities of such a wretch; but I determined to have a talk with my step-mother on the subject, and to insist the offense should not be repeated. So, having settled matters in my own mind, I took up a book and began to read. Presently, I dropped asleep. When I awoke my candle was burned out, and I was in utter darkness. I listened at the door but could hear no sound, so, softly unfastening it, I slipped down stairs, intending to get another candle and then to retire to bed. As I passed the door of the dining-room I heard my step-mother's voice pronounce my own name.

"Helen Livingston's money will set us all right. I always intended you should marry her, Cal., and that is the reason I brought her here as soon as she reached America."

"It doesn't appear to be a case of love at first sight on her part, does it? Curse her! I'll pay her out yet. I'll bring down her d—d New York pride a peg before I've done with her. But suppose she cuts up rough and won't listen to reason?"

"Trust me for that!" and my step-mother

laughed. 'I am her guardian, and can do as I please. Besides, away off here in this lonely place it would be a wonder if we two could not master one young girl. It must be done, Cal. That last gambling debt of yours just finished us up completely.'

"He swore a terrible oath, and said—Oh, I can't tell you what he said." She hid her burning face in her hands.

"My poor darling!" Her husband took her trembling hand in his own.

"Go on, dear. Do go on," pleaded Mrs. Livingston. "I am so anxious to hear about your escape, for you know you never gave me any details."

"I crept softly back to my room," resumed Gertrude, "with my mind set upon one thing, and that was instant flight. I waited till I heard the heavy blundering tread of my persecutor in the room above mine, which was the best bedroom, and always reserved for him. Then I heard my step-mother shut and lock her room door, and after that I commenced my preparations, moving as noiselessly as possible. I put all my mother's jewels and some valuable laces in a little bag, and dressed myself in a plain traveling dress. I had given what money I had brought with me to my step-mother, at her request; but I had a number of gold-pieces that papa had collected in the different countries of Europe to make me a bracelet, and those I put in my pocket. When all was still I took my bag in my hand, crept out on the roof of the shed that was opposite my window, and let myself down on the ground. Then I went to the stable. I knew that the door was seldom or never fastened,—it was open,

as I had hoped and expected. I had learned to saddle and bridle a horse under Andy's tuition, so I had no difficulty in that respect. And it was not long before I was speeding away at a full gallop on my road to Savannah. Fortunately the moon rose soon after I started. I reached Savannah about four o'clock, and, turning my horse loose, I gave him a cut with my whip, and he was soon trotting rapidly back. I was hesitating between seeking for a steamer for New York or going to the railway station, when I saw a sleepy-looking negro boy coming along with a carpet-bag in his hand. I determined to question him.

"Can you tell me," I asked, "when the next steamer sails for New York?"

"One goes dis mornin' at eight, missus," was the answer, "and I'se goin' on board of her now."

"I followed the boy at a distance through the lonely, shadowy streets, and saw him go on board of a large steamer, with the *Southern Belle* painted in gilt letters on the side. As soon as the boy disappeared from view I went on board, and concealed myself behind some packages of merchandise which were piled up on the lower deck. I did not make my appearance till, in the hurry of getting off, I could come from my place of concealment without being noticed. I told the captain some story about being hurried on at the last moment by my friends, and in the excitement of starting he had not noticed me, though I had spoken to him before. He told me my own story, saying some friends were in search of a young lady who had left her home, but that he had not seen her. I knew he suspected me, but he was a good, kind man, and did all he

could to make me comfortable. I found from him that my step-mother had a bad name in Savannah, and I think that was the reason he never revealed my secret; as, on asking me if I had friends in New York, and my replying that I had, he appeared satisfied.

"I had a miserable time of it, being sick and alone, and excited much attention, though every one was very kind to me. I was entirely worn out when we reached New York, and had hardly strength to go to Miss Davenant. The noisy city frightened me, and I felt confused and bewildered while being rattled over the stones in the hack the captain hired for me. I received a warm welcome from Miss Davenant, who was delighted by my likeness to my mother. She fully sympathized with my story, and wanted to consult some one, or to tell some of my relations, but I would not let her.

"My money was almost gone, and I had no clothes; so, rendered wary through fear of being discovered, instead of taking a set of jewelry that would have been traced, I took a large ruby out of one of my rings and sold it to a jeweler. He gave me five hundred dollars, which I thought was a large sum, but I know now that I was dreadfully cheated, as it was about one-third of its value. The first week I was so miserable that I could not do anything, but afterward I put the advertisement in the paper which you answered." She put her hand on her husband's caressingly. "You know now why I was so delighted to see Ralph that first evening. I felt as though I could have thrown myself into his arms as a long-lost brother—he is so much like papa, and brought his dear face back so vividly. Now you know

why I said I would like to change my name to Livingston. I did not like Lyle one bit. I knew who Ralph was before I met him, from your sister's description, and you can imagine my delight at finding myself among friends that I had never known except through what papa had told me. It was very hard to keep my secret when dear Aunt Livingston was so very kind to me. She would have found me out directly if I had been at all like papa, through my likeness to Ralph. But I am not one bit like him, but am exactly as mamma was at my age. Aunt Livingston said she felt drawn to me by some likeness she could not define, and the night I was audacious enough to wear mamma's diamonds she was more troubled still."

"I was your mother's dearest friend, Helen. The string of pearls you wore to-day was my bridal gift to her. The dear child's diamonds betrayed her, John: I recognized at once the celebrated Van Suys' necklace. Many a time has Gertrude Van Suys displayed it to me, and told me her grandfather bought it during the first French Revolution. I would have told you all about it some days ago, but Helen was so charmed with your perfect love and trust, and so morbidly afraid of her step-mother's power, that she forced me to promise most solemnly not to tell you until she was married."

"And the name, darling—must I lose my Gertrude? After all, the old name is very dear." He looked wistfully in her face. "Gertrude is the most beautiful name I know."

"No," she answered, blushing and smiling; "my step-mother called me Helen, and I was called so in France. It is my first name. But

papa always called me Gertrude, for it was my mother's name, and I love it best."

"Sister Helen, Cousin Gertrude, may all happiness attend you!" Ralph kissed the blushing girl.

His mother fondly held her in her arms, saying as she did so: "God bless you, Helen! I have at last found my daughter again."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

It is evening, and Gertrude and her husband are seated in the old school-room, the scene of so many pleasant evenings, and the spot where John Ward's heart was won. His arms are round her, and her soft cheek rests against his shoulder as they converse happily about the past.

"You trusted me through all! That is a very sweet thought to me, John. You married me, though you did not know who I was."

"Yes, and even my suspicious sister was won. She could not resist the influence of our little sunbeam." The husband raised her face and looked at her lovingly. "But, dear child! if you had only told me your great secret long ago, I could have saved you much trouble. Did you not know that our laws would have protected you against your step-mother? She could not have forced you to marry against your will had you appealed to the law for protection."

"No, I did not. You know I was educated in France, and I thought my step-mother could exercise her power as guardian, as I had often seen parents and guardians do there. But if it had not been for the trouble I would not be here now,—you would never have been worried by your governess!" And she raised her eyes saucily to his face.

"That is true, darling! Well, I am resigned

to my fate! But did not Miss Davenant know better?"

"No. She wanted to consult some lawyer, but I would not let her. They say women cannot keep a secret, but now you know better, John. Are you satisfied with your wife, sir?" She held up her rosy mouth for a kiss.

"I was more than satisfied before. Helen Gertrude Livingston! It was a beautiful name!"

"What a pity to change it!" said Gertrude, archly,—“particularly for a name of one syllable! But, John, do you understand that I am an heiress?—a great, *great* heiress!" Opening her eyes very wide, as if to express the magnitude of her fortune.

"I do fully understand, little wife, and I am sorry for it."

"Why—do you wish to tyrannize over me, sir?"

"No, Gertrude darling. But I would have liked to have you owe everything to me. I would fain have been not only your husband and protector, but the dispenser of all your pleasures and luxuries."

"Are you not, John? Is not your love everything to me? Can I ever repay your perfect trust and confidence in me?" His wife raised her loving, serious eyes to his face. "If I were worth millions, could I ever pay you back? There is something purer and richer than money can buy. It is not to be valued or weighed, as the scales of perfect purity and self-abnegation have never been found to test its value. It is like the diamond, you may shatter and ruin it, but it is almost impossible to destroy it. As long as there is one spark in either a man or

woman's nature, there is something divine about them, and there is always hope of either that man or woman. I would rather love and trust, fifty times, and be deceived, than never love at all. I would rather, by far, be led into utter wretchedness than be cold and cynical, as some men we see. They do not suffer, or are utterly blessed; they do not know what love is. They live—but what a life! The life of the clam or oyster, shut up tightly in its shell, which nothing can penetrate."

"My wife is a little enthusiast." He bent to kiss her blushing face.

"You know it is true, John! There is something glorious about love in its unselfishness; it is so pure and true." The eyes were full of tears that she raised to his face, for Gertrude was an enthusiast, as he had said.

"Yes, Gertrude, there is, as your poor little soiled handkerchief taught me."

"You all learned to love Gertrude Lyle, the governess, before you knew Gertrude Livingston, the heiress. The thought is very dear to me."

They were silent for a few moments, deep in happy thought.

"Gertrude!"

"What is it, John?"

"You have something that I want." The mock serious look left his face as he saw the anxious, troubled expression of hers. "Will you give me something that I want, to do anything I please with. To burn if I see fit?"

"Certainly, John." The words were spoken hesitatingly. "What is it?"

"Something very hideous."

"But what?"

"Your gray bonnet!"

"You wretch! What! consign the strongest part of my armor as governess to the flames!" She laughed merrily. "But, oh, John!" seriously, "there is something that I want you to do for me."

"What is it, darling?"

"Won't you purchase old Andy's freedom? And, oh! I want to give Miss Davenant something—a silver tea-service I think would be what would best please her."

"Certainly, darling; we will go to New York to-morrow, and I will write at once to a broker in Savannah about Andy."

"Thanks, dear; you are very kind, and you shall have the gray bonnet to burn if you like. You do not appreciate its worth, John." Gertrude laughed. "You cannot understand what a woman would suffer in buying and then wearing such a bonnet. I don't know but what I deserve to be called a heroine if I only had never worn the pink silk." And she shook her head seriously.

Suddenly the door was burst open, and two unruly little figures rushed in, while their Aunt Margaret followed, expostulating and entreating.

"What, up so late, young ones?" Mr. Ward held his arms open, while Rosa ran into their safe shelter.

"Only to say good night, papa!" as their father was kissed, and they stood hesitating before their new mother.

"Good night, mamma!" Rosa raised her face for her good-night kiss.

"Good night, darling!" The required kiss was given, and she held the child closely to her.

"Good night, Vannino, darling!" Gertrude kissed the boy's round, chubby face.

"Not Vannino, but John, to please papa!" Rosa interrupted.

"Not Vannino, but John, to please mamma!" the little fellow corrected. "John is best, mamma!" The child's face was raised for another good-night kiss.

"God bless you, Gertrude!" Aunt Margaret, moved and delighted in hearing the strange name discarded by the child's own consent, leaned over her new sister, and kissed her warmly too. "Bless you, darling! Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God."

THE END.

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