

GRACE MORTON;

OR,

THE INHERITANCE.

A CATHOLIC TALE.

BY
M. L. M.

Mary L. Meaney

(Copyright secured according to law.)

PHILADELPHIA:
PUBLISHED BY PETER F. CUNNINGHAM,
216 South Third Street.

1864.

PREFACE.

THE following simple story requires but few words by way of preface. It has been written with the view of aiding in the good work of furnishing youthful Catholics with reading matter which, while amusing the fancy, will also instruct the mind, and lead it to the contemplation of the beauty and holiness of religion. The authoress has endeavored to portray some of the trials and difficulties which frequently attend the profession of the true faith; as well as the unshaken constancy and fortitude that the Church expects her children to exhibit under such circumstances.

To the young Catholics of America, more particularly of our own dear State in which its scenes are laid, this little volume is affectionately inscribed
by THE AUTHORESS.

CONTENTS.

PREFACE.	PAGE.
CHAPTER I.—An Unexpected Meeting.....	7
“ II.—Forgive as you would be Forgiven.....	14
“ III.—The Past and the Present.....	24
“ IV.—The Housekeeper's Story.....	37
“ V.—Two Sorts of Kindness.....	57
“ VI.—How Time Passed at Oakdale.....	69
“ VII.—At the Springs.....	77
“ VIII.—Love's Hopes and Fears.....	94
“ IX.—The Soul's Awakening.....	112
“ X.—Disappointment and Sorrow.....	124
“ XI.—Brought into the Fold.....	142
“ XII.—Conflicts.....	148
“ XIII.—The Sacrifice.....	165
“ XIV.—Changes.....	185
“ XV.—New Scenes.....	201
“ XVI.—Life's Discipline.....	235
“ XVII.—A Husking Party.....	250
“ XVIII.—The Prodigal's Return.....	268
“ XIX.—A Glance at Other Scenes.....	306
“ XX.—Conclusion.....	317

GRACE MORTON;

OR,

THE INHERITANCE.

CHAPTER I.

An Unexpected Meeting.

"Hath time, hath absence, taught thee to forget?"

A large, old-fashioned travelling carriage, drawn by two fine black horses, toiled slowly up a mountain road in one of the interior counties of Pennsylvania. It was a sultry summer afternoon; the sun's rays beamed from a sky of dazzling brightness full upon the dusty highway; no passing cloud tempered the unwelcome radiance; not a breath of air was stirring to afford a momentary relief from the intense heat.

The carriage contained three persons. One was an elderly gentleman of commanding appearance, with features that would have been eminently handsome but for the haughty, repulsive expression that seemed habitual to them. His eyes, keen, bright and piercing, were bent with a look of severe disapproval on a lad who occupied the front seat, across which he had thrown himself moodily, with his head bent forward

and his thick, glossy masses of dark hair falling in disorder across his brow. Wholly unconscious of the old gentleman's scrutiny he retained his lolling posture, at times contracting his brow and working his lips angrily, while he gazed intently at a forest toward which the tired horses were advancing at a pace ill suited to his desires; and ever and anon he thrummed vehemently with hands and feet on the cushions, as if seeking some vent for his impatient feelings. The other occupant of the vehicle was a young girl of prepossessing appearance, though looking very weary and travel-worn, and evidently suffering from nervous anxiety, as her glance wandered alternately from the frowning gentleman at her side to the youth opposite, whose vexation was constantly exhibited with all a school-boy's recklessness, in utter defiance of the grave lessons he had received many times during the journey.

"We have reached the woods at last," said the old gentleman; and, leaning from the window he called to the coachman. "Sam, draw up and let the horses rest awhile beneath those spreading oaks."

The next moment the panting steeds were reined in under the welcome shade.

"Our journey is almost ended now, Grace," said her companion, turning to the young girl with all the ceremonious politeness of the old school, "and the remaining distance will seem almost pleasant after the discomfort of the past few hours."

"This shade is quite refreshing—it makes one forget fatigue;" replied Grace cheerfully, as she looked with eager delight at the huge old forest trees that skirted the highway on one side, making the cool, deep shadows all the more grateful from the glare of the sunny road. "Isn't it delightful, Al?"

This question was addressed to the boy who vouchsafed no answer.

"Not satisfied yet, Master Alfred?" The old gentleman spoke in a bantering tone, yet making his displeasure sufficiently evident. "An hour ago you thought that if we could only reach this forest, it would seem like paradise—yet something is wanted to make the paradise agreeable."

The youth started and threw back his dishevelled hair as he turned his face toward the speaker: a bright, handsome face it was, too, though still a little clouded by the ill-humor which he made an effort to conceal as he replied. "The paradise seems to lack one thing which is essential to my comfort just now—water."

"That is a want which cannot be supplied at present, my boy; but restrain your impatience, and in an hour hence you shall have as much of the clearest, coldest, spring water, as you may desire."

"Will it take another hour to reach your house, uncle?" said the boy dejectedly. "The village seems not far off."

"The distance is greater than you imagine; it is ful-

ly two miles, and my place lies several miles beyond it."

Alfred fell back among the cushions with a dissatisfied air, muttering that he would get a drink of water at the very first house they came to in the village—he wasn't going to wait an hour for it.

Again the old gentleman's brow clouded, and his lips parted to utter a stern rebuke, but he checked the impulse as he met a deprecating look from Grace.

"We must have patience, brother," she said gently; then eagerly exclaimed, "Oh, what fine blackberries! Perhaps if you had a few—"

"Where are they?" interrupted the boy, "O, I see; that girl and boy have their baskets full—and they're coming this way, too."

And with a boisterous "hallo!" he threw open the carriage door, and clearing the steps at a bound, advanced to meet the owner of the berries, of whom he eagerly inquired if the berries grew anywhere about where he could pick some.

The girl answered that she and her little brother had picked all the ripe ones they could find; then noticing his disappointed look she reached the small basket her brother carried to Alfred, telling him he was quite welcome to some of those if he would accept them; which he very readily did, taking a liberal portion of the fruit, which he began to devour with a greediness that made his sister blush deeply.

"We are very much indebted to you," she said to the young girl who had now approached the carriage, and was tendering some of the berries to its occupants. "My brother was so thirsty that the fresh, cool fruit is very acceptable to him, as you may see."

Grace while speaking reached the basket to her uncle who refused with a courteous bow; then, taking a few of the glossy berries, she returned it to the owner. Alfred's eyes followed it longingly.

"Will you not take some more?" asked the young girl; and, without waiting for an answer, she plucked some large leaves from a bough overhanging the carriage, and filled them with the contents of the basket, despite the laughing remonstrances of Grace. Then with a pleasant smile she turned from the vehicle.

"Are you going to the village?" asked Grace. "Then you had better come with us; we're going through it. There's plenty of room in the carriage, and," she added gently, as she saw her proposition was not altogether agreeable to the proud old gentleman, "uncle Althorpe will be glad to save you and your little brother such a long walk."

At the name of Althorpe the girl started; her face flushed, and she fixed her eyes with a timid wistfulness on the person indicated, while she trembled as if agitated by some sudden emotion. He observed it and bent upon her one of his keen, searching glances. She was a slender, delicate-looking girl, with skin of snowy

whiteness, and soft, lustrous, blue eyes. These were her only claims to beauty. She was poorly dressed, and, though not over fourteen years, she had the look and air of one who had experienced much of life's cares and sorrows. All this Mr. Althorpe perceived at a glance, and he next turned his eyes upon her companion. The child was at that moment looking up at him, and, with the graceful homage he had been taught to pay to old age, he lifted his coarse straw hat, thus fully revealing a beautifully-formed head, around which long curls of golden brown were falling in rich profusion.

"Oh, isn't he beautiful?" exclaimed Grace involuntary, as she saw the lofty white brow with its delicate tracery of blue veins, the large, fine eyes beaming with an expression of mingled roguishness and gravity, while a covert smile dimpled the chiselled lips and rounded chin.

For a while Mr. Althorpe gazed upon the child as if spell-bound; then rousing himself as if seeking to throw off some unpleasant emotion, he harshly ordered the coachman to drive on.

"May they not come with us, uncle? there is plenty of room," pleaded the kind-hearted Grace, but already the horses were in motion, and the vehicle was hurrying swiftly away. A sarcastic remark as to the expediency of making companions of "blackberry-girls" silenced Grace. She had never before been addressed in that

tone by the old man who prided himself on the most punctilious courtesy towards the gentler sex. And during the silent drive she puzzled herself with vain efforts to unravel the mystery of his changed deportment; while he was absorbed in a reverie which, judging by the gloom that deepened on his features, was of no pleasant kind.

CHAPTER II.

"Forgive as you would be forgiven."

"There is no spot so dark on earth,
But love can shed bright glimmers there,
Nor anguish known of human birth
That yieldeth not to faith and prayer."

"Sister Angy, what makes you stand looking after that carriage?" said the child, turning his earnest gaze upon his sister, who still watched with gloomy sadness the vehicle that was now rapidly receding from view. She did not hear the softly-spoken words, but as the child touched her arm she looked down upon him with an abstracted air, while large tears gathered in her mournful eyes. With a quick, petulant motion she dashed away the grief drops, and took the little fellow's hand.

"What makes you cry, Angy?" he enquired, clinging caressingly to her with all a child's earnest sympathy in his bright eyes. "Are you sorry we didn't get a ride in the carriage?"

"No, Willie, I would rather walk," she repeated bitterly. "I am not tired—are you, darling?"

"Oh no, I am not a bit tired—not a single bit," was the emphatic reply. "I wish we could get some more berries; can't we?"

"No, it is too late."

"Then you'll have to give me some of yours: Willie can't take home an empty basket."

The young girl stood for a moment undecided. "I don't want to go home just now," she said smilingly. "Willie, if you are not tired we might go to that huckleberry patch we found the other day."

"But you said they were not ripe."

"They may be by this time,"

"Let's go see."

Willie slung his little basket on his arm and walked on sturdily with his sister, prattling merrily as was his custom; but she, absorbed in her own thoughts seemed forgetful of his presence.

"What ails you, sissy?" he said at last shaking her arm so as to enforce her attention. "You're not a bit like Angy."

"Am I not? she said absently.

"Not a bit," repeated Willie, "I guess, as you say to me when I'm naughty, our Angy has gone away and some one else has come in her place. There, now, you're like Angy again, when you laugh. But what makes you so quiet? All the day you were talking and singing."

"One must be quiet sometimes, you know, bubby. It won't do to be talking and singing all the time."

The child still unsatisfied, looked wistfully at her sad countenance. "Are you sick, sister Angy?" he asked presently.

"No, indeed, Willie." She smiled upon the anxious little speaker, but the smile was a sad one, and was followed by a sigh.

"I wish we hadn't met that fine carriage."

"Never mind about that now, Willie; let us talk of something else." Angela made an effort to speak cheerfully. "Here are the huckleberry bushes, and see, Willie, there are plenty of ripe berries to-day."

"O yes, look—just look!" and with a joyous bound Willie sprang to one of the low bushes, and began gathering its burden of blueish fruit.

"You little rogue, you have chosen the very best bush," said his sister. "I must hunt as good a one for myself."

Angela wandered along till she was partly hid from the child's view; then she sank wearily on the ground, and regardless of the fruit hanging in tempting clusters all around her, she bowed her head upon her knees and gave full scope to the emotion she had long been struggling to suppress. Suddenly a little soft arm was wound about her neck, and looking up she encountered the rosy face of her little brother peeping over her shoulder, while he triumphantly held up his half-filled basket. But his exultant laugh was hushed, his ruby lips quivered, and tears welled up to his starry eyes, "Oh, Angy, what is the matter? Are you angry at me?" he sobbed brokenly.

"Angry at you, darling, precious boy! oh never—

never!" and with yearning tenderness the sister folded her arms about him, and holding him in a fond embrace murmured indistinct words of love and endearment, while her tears fell fast on his sunny ringlets.

Thus they remained for a long time; then Angela tenderly wiped his face with her handkerchief, and put back the clustering curls from his heated brow.

"Willie," said she after a time, "do you remember that hymn to the Blessed Virgin I was teaching you the other day?"

"Do you mean, 'List Sweet Mother?'—I know it all by heart, sister."

"Let us sing it before we go home," said Angela. And soon his childish accents were blending with her's in the following hymn:

"List sweet mother! soft notes breaking
Gently on the evening air;
Holy thoughts the mind awaking,
Lead the soul to thee in prayer.

"Ave Maria! Beam of heaven!
Guide us o'er this life's dark sea—
When our soul's frail barque is riven,
In distress we call on thee!

"Ave Maria! Gently stealing
On the ear those accents come,
While within the heart, deep feeling
Echoes back each angel tone.

"Ave Maria! God has given
Thee the power to aid us here—
Shield us—guide us home to heaven—
Virgin Mother! lend thine ear!"

When the hymn was finished Angela took up the basket; Willie playfully raised it to his shoulder, as if it was a great load; and they proceeded homeward, taking a by-path across the fields and commons, which was a much shorter and pleasanter way than by the public road. Angela, resolutely maintaining an appearance of cheerfulness, beguiled the walk with pleasant stories such as her little companion loved to hear.

"Do not say anything about that carriage, Willy," said she, as they approached the village, "Mamma will hear about it some time, but not now; it would make her feel sad."

"And then she wouldn't eat any supper," said Willie thoughtfully. "After I cry about anything I can play, and run about, and eat, just as if I had never cried at all; but when poor mamma cries she always gets sick; O, here's our house,—ain't you glad, Angy?"

Their home was a small frame house at the entrance of the village; old and dingy, and a good deal dilapidated, nor did the interior present a more inviting aspect. The front room which served as kitchen and sitting-room was furnished in the plainest manner. A threadbare carpet, a pine table, chairs from which the paint was all worn off, a few cooking utensils—scrupulously clean and neat was the small apartment, but extreme poverty was visible all around. In the one narrow window a geranium and a "Johnny-jump-up" were in bloom; these were all in the way of ornament that the poor apartment could boast.

Beside the window a woman still young and of lady-like appearance, though wasted by sorrow and toil, was busily employed with her needle. Near the open door a pale, sickly-looking girl older than Angela, was bending over an embroidery frame. On the step sat a little girl of ten or eleven years, intent upon her school-books. On seeing Angela, she hastened to help her to bring in the basket of fruit.

"Such a heavy load for you to bring so far, Angy," she said affectionately. "Willie is too little to help you, but to-morrow afternoon I can go with you, as there's no school."

"And Mrs. Walters will buy so many berries," said the eldest sister, laying aside her embroidery, at which she had been trying to work in the gathering twilight. "Her daughter came just after you went out, and she says her mother will buy all the blackberries we can pick. And think of our good fortune, Angela. Miss Walters wishes to have a pretty dress made of black lace, run with gold thread, and she will pay the same for this as for silk embroidery though it is not half so tedious. She says she will require a great deal of embroidery done from now until Christmas, and she will pay us the same for it as she would have to pay in the city. Now isn't that good news, Angy?"

"Yes indeed! We were lucky to get work from Mrs. Walters; they require so much and pay so well. But

picking berries is the easiest work, and I am glad they want so many."

Angela spoke cheerfully, but her mother noticed a constraint in her manner which she at first attributed to fatigue. But finding that at supper time and during the evening she continued thoughtful and dejected, the anxious parent finally inquired the cause. Jane and Willie had now retired to rest, but Angela hesitated about answering the inquiry, and at last said sadly.

"It is something I would like to keep from your knowledge, mother, for it will only distress you, but you would soon learn it from somebody else — grandfather has returned home."

A slight color rose to the mother's face. "How do you know that?" she asked in a husky tone.

"I have seen him."

"Where?—when? but it cannot be. He left the old place to return to it no more, and he is not one to change his plans."

"But, indeed, he has come back, mamma, I saw him."

"You would not know him, my child."

"I did not at first. But when I heard his name and looked at him quite closely I remembered his face very well. He looks just as he did when papa took me to see him when we first came to this place."

"That was six years ago," said the eldest daughter softly. "Just a year before poor papa died."

There was silence for some minutes. The widow and the fatherless were weeping for the loved and lost. Angela was the first to speak.

"Even if he had changed I would have known it was grandpapa by the way he looked at Willie."

"Did he see Willie?" The mother looked up eagerly, with the excitement of hope in her voice and manner. "Then he must have known that he was looking on his grandchild—he could not fail to recognise in him the perfect image of the son he once idolized. Did he speak to Willie?"

Angela shook her head sadly, and with fast-falling tears gave an account of the meeting which had so deeply wounded her. The mother and sister listened in sorrowful silence.

"And that young lady and her brother!" continued Angela in a tone of mingled bitterness and grief. "They called him uncle—"

"He had neither brother nor sister," interrupted the mother, "so you must be mistaken, Angela."

"They may be some distant relatives or friends whom he has adopted," said Sophia.

"And *they* will live with him in that beautiful place, while *we*—" Angela cast a glance around the poor apartment; at her patient, ever-toiling mother, and at the beloved eldest sister, at once her guide and companion, who, as she had heard several persons remark, was going into a decline, and could not live much lon-

ger unless she had some respite from the toil that had already undermined her constitution—and yet alas! Sophia must work, work unceasingly, to help to procure the merest necessities of life. The young girl thought of all this and bowed her head upon her mother's lap to hide the convulsive emotions with which she had for hours past been vainly struggling. When she had at length grown calmer she told of the angry and vindictive feelings she had experienced.

"I know it was very sinful," she murmured, "but, dear mamma, I could not help feeling so when he drove off so unfeelingly. I am afraid that for the time I hated him."

"We must forgive, even as we hope to be forgiven, my child, and I know you will strive to do this. It is hard to do it," said the mother gently caressing her troubled child, "but remember our daily prayer, 'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us;' and remember, my love, that He who has taught us this prayer, has taught us also by His own sublime example, how to forgive."

"I do strive to forgive grandfather," murmured the weeping girl. "I have tried and I will still try not to harbor angry feelings against him. But, mother, just think how he disowned papa for becoming a Catholic, and how after all this time he even would not speak to dear little Willie."

"Let us talk no more on this subject, my daughter,"

said the mother. "It is a very painful one, and you have suffered your mind to dwell too much upon it. Be careful not to cherish resentful feelings against your grandfather. Turn your thoughts to some other subject as often as they revert to this. When you think of him let it be with pitying love; for his prejudice and implacability have left him to linger out his last years, a lonely, and it must be, remorseful old man, unloving and unloved. We are richer in our poverty than he in all his wealth; far richer and happier; for we have each other to love and to care for, and to be loved by in return. Above all we have the consolations and joys which are known only to the children of the true Faith, of which, alas! he knows not. Think of all this, Angela, when you are tempted to uncharitable thoughts against him. Would you give up your religion to secure his favor? for you could secure it, I know, by such a step."

"What a question, mother," said Angela, "you know well, dearest, best of mothers, no child of yours would give the true Faith for any worldly good."

"I hope they would not, but remember, my daughter, it is of little avail to cling to the Church in theory, and refuse to practice its precepts. In our prayers we will remember your grandfather, and beg for him the grace of conversion—thus only let us think of him henceforward."

Thus spoke the Christian parent, and at her sugges-

tion "the beads" which they were accustomed to recite together every evening, were now offered for the conversion of the implacable grandfather.

"I hope our Blessed Mother will obtain for him this grace," said Angela, as she rose from her knees calmed and comforted. "But oh, Sophy," she added with a smile, "*wouldn't* he be angry if he knew that *such* a prayer was offered for him, and to a *mere creature* too."

CHAPTER III.

The Past and the Present.

"Swift o'er Memory's magic glass
Now the changing shadows pass."

Arousing as from a painful dream when the carriage stopped Mr. Althorpe assisted Grace to alight, and with formal politeness welcomed her and her brother to Oakdale, which was to be henceforth their home. It was a fine old country-seat, not remarkable for size or grandeur, but sufficiently extensive, and with all the appliances of a comfortable home. What the dwelling lacked in a picturesque point of view was amply atoned for by the beautiful scenery around. It stood on the slope of a lofty hill, commanding an extensive view of the surrounding country, with a vast sweep of level plain, chequered with alternate farms and woodland, and threaded by a bright river which, just opposite Oakland, was spanned by a rude bridge of grey stone, half hidden by tangled ferns and creepers. Among the trees on the other side nestled the pretty village,

with its background of dense forests and dark blue mountains, all glowing in the rich light of the afternoon sun.

The house was a plain square building of two stories, with a deep, shady piazza running across the entire front. Before it spread what had once been a lawn, now overrun with a thick growth of rank, coarse weeds. Around the wooden pillars, and over the steps of the portico, swift growing creepers had clambered, twining among the honeysuckles and roses that had broken loose from pillar and lattice. The fine trees from which the place had derived its name, alone flourished amid the scene of general decay. All beside—house, garden, orchard and fields—had an aspect of utter neglect and desolation that struck unpleasantly on the owner, as muttering to himself rather than to his companions, of the changes a few years could make, he impatiently tore apart the matted vines which obstructed the entrance.

"Oh, this is charming!" cried Grace delightedly. "So much better than if everything was in perfect order. Won't we have a merry time helping the gardener, Al?"

"Yes, and won't we have a *screeching* time when you get your hands scratched in this style;" holding up his hands marked with sundry tokens of the rose-vines' resentment of his officious interference with their straggling propensity. "Whew!" he whistled

as he entered the hall, "if this isn't what our old doctor would call a very unsanitary spot."

"Better let me try them shutters, sir," said the coachman to Mr. Althorpe. "The bolts is considerable rusted, I guess. There!"

With a vigorous effort the shutters were thrown open, and straightway the intruding sunbeams made bars and showers of diamond dust through the spacious room. Mr. Althorpe turned away in disgust from its repulsive atmosphere, its dust and cobwebs. This was surely a very cheerless coming home—no one to utter a word of welcome, or minister to his comfort, no room ready for his reception, nor preparation for supper. Yet he could not well have expected to find it otherwise. Acting on a sudden impulse he had hurried homeward, without even apprising any of his friends in the village of his coming. Had he unconsciously anticipated a reception such as he had enjoyed in by-gone times, when, on returning home after a brief absence he would find his housekeeper in her best dress and cap, watching his arrival, while everything within and without the house was in perfect order, and the creature comforts he could so well appreciate, prepared in abundance for his enjoyment?

Sam was forthwith despatched to the village to purchase provisions, and to engage some capable woman to take immediate charge of household affairs. The latter part of his errand promised to be something of

an undertaking; to procure good help at a moment's notice is not very easy, more particularly in a country place where the number of persons willing to live out is small, and generally of the most *do-little* sort. But the trial must be made at all events; and, hoping that his messenger would be successful as he had been empowered to offer the most liberal terms, Mr. Althorpe turned his attention to his young companions, who were actively employed in trying to make the parlor habitable, dusting and arranging everything with a zeal quite inspiring. Leaning against the door he watched them with interest not unmingled with envy. Youth, bright spring-time of life! What a fund of enjoyment it can contrive to find in the most untoward circumstances, in perplexities and annoyances that harass older minds. To Alfred Morton this trying his hand at work he had never done before was "capital fun;" while his gentle sister exerted herself to do something for the comfort of one from whom both she and her brother had received much kindness.

"O, uncle!" she exclaimed on perceiving him, "I thought you were out in the garden."

"And so you got to work, instead of resting yourselves."

"We're not doing much, only trying to make the room a little clear so that you will have some place to sit down. But, uncle, how is it to be—"

"There's Sam," interrupted Alfred, "and he's bringing two women with him."

"Ah, then he has been successful!"

Mr. Althorpe stepped to the door in time to see a female figure disappear in the direction of the kitchen, while a half-grown girl who had been following her, stopped shyly on perceiving the old gentleman, and glanced at the coachman as if to intimate that he would explain her business.

"I didn't go to the village yet, sir," said Sam. "This little girl and her grandmother—I met them on the road so I brought them here. They'll set to work right off, and get things under way by the time I get back.

Mr. Althorpe's domestic anxieties were set at rest.

"Come, young people, we will get up stairs and get rid of some of the dust of travel before supper-time."

And up stairs they went, opening all the doors and windows on their way, admitting the pure air and bright sunlight into the long closed apartments. Grace was in ecstasies with all she saw, pointing out some beautiful view from each window, or examining the quaint, old-fashioned furniture, so different from anything she had ever seen before. Had her aim been to please the owner of Oakdale, she could not have adopted a more successful method. Her curiosity and girlish enthusiasm both amused and flattered him; his stern features took an expression of proud satisfaction; his manner lost the chilling reserve which had hitherto

awed the young girl, throwing back upon her warm heart the grateful affection she wished to lavish on her benefactor. Even Alfred's boyish exuberance of spirits was tolerated now. He talked and whistled to his hearts content as he scampered from room to room, bounding up stairs with long strides, opening shutters with a bang, stumbling over everything that came in his way, and making altogether as much racket as he conveniently could. In the past days every such breach of decorum would have been met by a stern glance or rebuke.

Alfred's delight at this change was loudly expressed as soon as he found himself alone with his sister in the garden.

"I say, Gracie, the old cove isn't so bad after all; he only wants stirring up."

"For shame, Alfred, is that the way to speak of an old gentleman like uncle?"

But Alfred only laughed and went on as if she had not spoken. "If I had three or four of our fellows here now, would'nt we stir him up! But never mind, I guess I've made a good beginning. I have some hopes of him if he doesn't fall back into his old grumpy ways this evening. Now, Gracie, what's the use of looking shocked? The old gentleman doesn't find me so horrifying after all, as he would never think of making me his heir."

"Alfred, I do wish you wouldn't talk so foolishly. You have no reason to fancy that he has any such intention."

"I tell you he has, though. Didn't I just hear Sam telling the woman in the kitchen so? They're cronies, I guess, her and Sam—and when she saw me she looked as huffish—just as though I cared for her looks."

A summons to tea prevented Grace's reply. The table had been laid out in the portico, and offered a most inviting repast to which the travellers were disposed to do full justice. Mr. Althorpe, to the delight of Grace no less than of her brother, was quite pleasant and talkative throughout the evening. It was as if he thus sought relief from the burdens of thought, for several times Grace saw a return of the angry gloom which had darkened his countenance during the last few miles of their journey; and, although he could not to see the drowsiness which in spite of all her efforts would steal over her, he continued to talk until a late hour, manifestly reluctant to have her leave him. As he gave her her candle he pleasantly bade her sleep soundly, and be quite refreshed against the morning; but when she in turn wished him a good night's rest, his countenance clouded again, and she thought he sighed as he turned away.

A good night's rest for one to whom memory, faith-

ful to her task, was forever bringing up recollections that "murdered repose!"

Make friends of potent Memory,
The past she ruleth—"

sang the sweet poetess of Hartford, but how few heed the warning. How many lay up for old age a fearful store of bitter memories—kept at bay while mingling in life's busy scenes, but coming ever in seasons of quiet and loneliness to harass the guilty mind and torture the shrinking spirit.

To the aged owner of Oakdale, memory was no "friend." She had even driven him from his pleasant mountain home to seek forgetfulness in travel and excitement; she had accompanied him back again, and laid upon him her magic spell, bringing up with torturing distinctness, scenes of which he would fain banish the remembrance forever. For his own peace of mind he would banish it, not through shame or repentance! O no! For was he not, with blind obstinacy, still walking in the path which had led him astray from happiness? Came there not to him a voice as from the grave, asking him to atone for the past by now dealing justly with the widow and the fatherless in yonder village? But he hushed the pleading whisper, and fondly hoped to enliven the old house by bringing to it "young people who would make its walls echo the music of happy voices," while those who had a claim upon his heart and home were denied their rights.

There was another in that old house to whom sleep was a stranger that night. The woman whose huffishness had displeased Alfred Morton, remained until early dawn in the kitchen, rocking drearily to and fro, murmuring at intervals a few words which gave the key to her uncomfortable musings.

"*His heir!* this bold, young fellow neither kith nor kin, heir to Oakdale! Ah well, the good book says the heart of man is desperately wicked, and if there's a more wicked heart than yours is shown to be, Gerald Althorpe, I don't want ever to come in contact with its owner. I did think all along that he would repent at last, and spend his last years in the midst of those who should be now under this roof; but no, I've seen his face, and 'tis harder and sterner than ever. He didn't see me, and I am glad of that, for on account of them that's dead and gone, as well as for the gratitude due to him from me and mine, I want to stay here till the house cleaning is over, and matters get well in train. If he would only go away somewhere for a few days himself, and these youngsters, that I don't want about the place anyway. But there's no chance of that; Sam says he wanted him to stay in Philadelphia and let him come on and have things prepared as they ought to be; but no—he was in as great a hurry to get back to the old place as he was five years ago to leave it. Well-a-day! things must take their own course, I suppose, and there's no sense in fighting

against it. But one thing is certain, I shall take good care to keep out of his way, these few days to come; and mighty glad I'll be if I can get away before he knows of my being here."

In this hope the good woman was disappointed, for as she was busily preparing breakfast who should enter the kitchen but Mr. Althorpe. His surprise was equal to her embarrassment.

"You here, Dora?" he exclaimed hastily.

"Yes, Mr. Althorpe," replied Dora somewhat stiffly, "I made bold to come, sir, as I happened to see your carriage pass through the village; and I thought like as not you did not know that the farmer you left here was gone away, and the place all going to ruin, if I may say so. So I said to my grand-daughter, Hannah, that we'd come up any way to the old place, and make sure that you would have no trouble about your supper, and getting a room ready for you to sleep in." On the way we met Sam, who was glad to find us coming, but I told him not to mention my name, thinking you might not like my being so officious, though I don't mean to be so."

"I could never think you so," said Mr. Althorpe as she paused.

She brightened a little at the interruption, and with less reluctance went on to explain that as he had brought company with him, she had thought he would

have no objection to her staying until he could get a housekeeper to suit him.

"I wish you would stay and take your old place here," said Mr. Althrope. "Can't you?"

"There's nothing to hinder me, sir, if you wish," answered the woman with evident satisfaction at the arrangement.

"And the little girl—I liked the the way she waited on the table last evening — by the way, I might have known that was one of your nice suppers. But, perhaps, Hannah's mother cannot spare her."

"Bless you, sir, her mother is far enough away. They all went out West as much as three years ago, but I kept Hannah with me for I thought it would be too lonesome in my little place without her. They wanted me to go with them, but I couldn't think of such a thing."

"I am glad you didn't. How is your son doing now? Does he still follow the sea?"

"Yes, sir; he's second mate of the old brig now, and he says he'll stick to her while there's two planks together."

At this moment Mr. Althrope perceived Grace, and calling her to the door presented her as his ward, Miss Grace Morton, a most amiable young lady who, he had every confidence, would soon render herself a favorite with his good housekeeper, Mrs. Wilson. The latter was disposed to be rather distant at first, but the

young girl greeted her with a winning sweetness that the good woman could not resist. She gave a more friendly glance into the dark lustrous eyes that were turned to hers so confidently; and when on addressing her as "Miss Morton," she was stopped by an impulsive, "O, don't call me 'miss,' dear mother Wilson, you and I are going to be better friends than that, I hope." Her triumph was complete. Grace was from that moment established in the housekeeper's favor, and ere the day closed she had made her new friends acquainted with her brief history.

Her mother had died several years previous, leaving her children to the care of her step-father, who solemnly promised to act a father's part towards them. Marrying not long afterward he soon thought proper to send them to distant schools. Mr. Althrope chanced to see Alfred, and, learning that he belonged to a family with whom his own had formerly been connected by the closest ties of friendship, and that he and his sister were regarded only as incumbrances at home, he had kindly proposed taking them to his own home, where Grace could stay as long as she found it agreeable, while Alfred, who was now fourteen years old, should be properly educated and established in life.

Grace finished her narration by saying that she hoped Uncle Althrope (as he desired them to call him) would be willing to have her stay a long time at Oak dale; it was such a sweet place, and she already felt so

much at home -- she had not been so happy since her mother's death, as she was there. The good woman's heart warmed toward the young girl, who although sixteen years had scarcely passed over her head, had already tasted the cup of woe, in losing alike parents and home. She noticed that Grace gave no intimation of her brother having been adopted as heir; that was probably, therefore, a fiction of Sam's imagining, and she could afford to feel more friendly to those she had at first regarded as usurpers. Not that she could ever take to Master Alfred; he was not the kind of youth to strike her fancy, as she unhesitatingly declared, thereby becoming more "hateful" in his eyes than ever. But in September he was sent to college, much to his satisfaction, as the old gentleman had relapsed into "his grumpish ways," and found occasion to lecture his boisterous ward more frequently than to him seemed necessary or agreeable. Grace was left to amuse or occupy herself as she saw proper—her companionship being only acceptable to the misanthropic old man at intervals—but she was happy with her music, her books, her flowers and pets of all kinds, and she and the housekeeper never wearied of each other's society.

CHAPTER IV.

The Housekeeper's Story.

"One of that obstinate sort of men
Who if they once take hold of an opinion,
They call it honor, justice, truth or faith,
And sooner part from life than let it go."

It was a stormy night late in the autumn. The winds, eyrie and mournful, howled through the hills and valleys, whistling through the pine wood behind Oakdale and driving the rain in fierce gusts against the old mansion as if resolved on gaining admittance. Grace sat in the cheerful kitchen with the housekeeper; Hannah had gone to bed. Mr. Althorpe was absent on business that would detain him some days. It seemed, as Grace said, that they two were alone in the world, as they sat hour after hour, by the fire, talking but little, for at times a voice raised to the highest pitch could scarcely be heard, as wind and rain battled fiercely together, and the thunder crashed and boomed with a violence that made Grace, unused to the fierce storms of a mountainous region, cling closer to her companion, while she shook, as if in an ague fit, with nervous dread.

"The worst is over," said the housekeeper at last.

Grace drew a sigh of relief, "I am so glad, for it was terrible. Ah! listen, mother Wilson, it isn't all over yet. How awful! Did you ever see anything like it?"

"Yes," replied the housekeeper speaking as if under a spell. "I remember many such a storm,

and one night that was worse than this, far more terrible, for the storm within, was worse than the storm on the mountains."

"Tell me about it, do, please," pleaded Grace eagerly.

Mrs. Wilson shook her head, but she could rarely deny anything to Grace, and at last yielding to her entreaties she began her story.

"It was to just such a place as this that I went to live after my marriage; my husband being the farmer of the estate, while I attended to the dairy and the poultry yard. We had a snug cottage, and were just as comfortable and happy as our hearts could wish. But it is not of ourselves that I have to tell, so let me come at once to the time when I found myself suddenly left a widow with two little children and not knowing which way to turn to earn a living for myself and them; for as to parting with either of them, as some women in like circumstances do, it was not to be thought of. At all hazards I resolved that my home should be theirs, let it be as poor and miserable as it might. However, as it fell out, I might have spared myself all my anxious forebodings, for the owner of the place, I'll call him Mr. Stone—felt deeply for my situation, and when his wife—oh what a sweet, kind-hearted lady she was—proposed that I should have the place of housekeeper at the mansion, he willingly assented. No proposition could be more welcome to me. Every spot of the old place seemed like home, and I knew besides, that should anything happen to me my

children would have a good friend and adviser in Mr. Stone, who was really kind and charitable, though strangers would not have thought so, he was so grave and reserved in his manners.

"Well, my dear, that was my home for many a long year, and a happy home it was to me. I never had the shadow of care, save for the grief I naturally felt for the troubles that came upon the family. There were little twin girls—oh, what sweet little creatures they were, for all the world like the fairies their brother used to like to read about. The mother's heart was wrapt up in them, and the father forgot his grave formal ways when he looked at them and was as ready for a frolic as they. Ah well, they were not left to us long. A fever broke out in the neighborhood, and our darlings were the very first victims; they died within a few hours of each other, and ere the week was out their mother had joined them in a better world.

"Ah, what a changed house was that, but the greatest change of all was in Mr. Stone. Sorrow has a hardening effect on some people. I have seen it so in several instances, but in none so much as with him. He would shut himself up in his library day after day, taking his meals there by himself, and refusing admission even to his remaining child, a bright, beautiful boy of whom any father might be proud.

"Oh, how cruel that was!" interrupted Grace, "after the poor boy had lost his mother and little sisters. I

think his father was just like the name you call him. But the poor child had you, Mother Wilson, and you loved him and were good to him, I know."

"Yes; not dearer to me was one of my own children than he was always. Indeed, he was a boy that any one would feel attached to; and his father, I have no doubt, loved him, but he hid his feelings so well that William never dreamed that they existed. So he began to grow shy and timid in his father's presence, always thinking that he had given offence, yet not knowing in what way; and that seemed to displease Mr. Stone, and he grew only the more cold towards the dear boy. At last he was sent to college, and very glad was I on his account, though for myself I missed him greatly, and so did my Robert and Hannah, who were wont to be the companions of his sports.

"But when he finally returned home things seemed brighter than I had ever hoped for. He had graduated with all the honors, which pleased his father greatly, and I could see that he regarded his son with equal pride and affection. Master William was now as fine looking a young man as one would wish to see. How well I remember the night after his return when he came to me to have, as he said, a long chat all to ourselves like old times. His fine features all aglow with feeling, and his eyes—such eyes I never saw, of the deepest, clearest blue, one moment dancing with merriment, and the next darkening with earnestness or

sorrow, as each emotion was uppermost in his heart. He had a great deal to tell me, but most of all about a young lady whom he was soon to marry. I was prepared for this, for he had spoken of her frequently during his last vacation, and his father had lately hinted to me that the household would soon have a mistress, but that would in no way affect my position. He was well pleased with his son's choice, he told me, for the young lady was the daughter of a gentleman in New York with whom he had formerly been acquainted. So he made no objection to the marriage taking place as soon as the young people desired, but he would not go to the wedding, nor did he afterwards wish to hear any reference to it. It seemed as if the subject reminded him too painfully of the wife whose loss he still mourned in secret. He was, however, quite pleased with his daughter-in-law, as indeed he could scarcely fail to be, for she was a charming young creature, beautiful, amiable and ladylike, one whom even I thought worthy of our Master William. They were a happy young couple, and the old house was gayer and more homelike than it had been for years.

"But one thing troubled me, and made me feel that sooner or later our pleasant time would be abruptly ended. My young lady, as I accidentally learned, was a Catholic. Now, Mr. Stone was a man of no religion himself, but he respected all forms of religious belief, except Popery. I have heard it said that on the walls

of a town in Ireland—Bandon, I think—was formerly written: "Turk, Jew or atheist, may enter here, but no Papist."

"Oh do you believe it?" interrupted Grace, "could any one be so bigoted?"

"Well, my dear, I have no doubt of it, I know that Mr. Stone's sentiments were very similar—indeed his hatred of "Romanism" amounted, I used to think, to a monomania. Knowing this, I thought it no more than right to give a word of warning to the young wife. Her face flushed a little, but she smiled as she replied, that nothing could ever induce her to deny her religion.

"There was little fear that Mr. Stone would question her about it, for they very seldom met except at meal time, he spending most of his time in walking or riding abroad, or when at home, shut up in the library, after his old fashion. Even during his wife's lifetime he had much given to reading, and rather liked solitude; after her death this disposition grew upon him, and was only at rare intervals that he joined the pleasant circle that was now often gathered in the old house.

"I declare he was just like uncle," said Grace, "I could almost think you were describing him."

Mrs. Wilson bit her lip, "There are many such people in the world, my dear," she rejoined after a moments' silence, "as you will find when you grow

older. However, as I was saying, this rendered it very improbable that he would have any talk with his new daughter on the subject of religion: besides he knew that her parents were Episcopalians, and if he had given a thought to the matter would naturally imagine her to be the same. But she had been educated at a convent, and while there had become a Catholic, with the full consent, she told me, of her parents, who were noways bigoted, though considered very strict members of their church. She used to like to talk to me about the convent, and describe the mode of life pursued by the nuns, and the order and regularity with which everything was conducted, and the different employments allotted to each period of the day. I had somehow had a fancy that they spent all their time in prayer a notion which used to amuse her greatly. Ah me! what pleasant hours we spent in this sort of chat!"

"But, Mother Dora, wasn't it strange that Mr. Stone never suspected that his son's wife was a Catholic?" said Grace as the housekeeper broke off her narrative and fell into a fit of musing, "I should think that when she went to church—"

"There was no place of worship belonging to her creed within many miles of us," interrupted the housekeeper. "It was a great trouble to the dear young lady, and she often said that if there was a church built in the neighborhood she should have nothing else

on earth to wish for. Afterwards when one was built—but there! I am getting ahead of my story—

“There was great rejoicings in the old house when a baby was born. I think it would be hard to say who amongst us took most pride in the little stranger. The grandfather might have been rather disappointed at first that it was not a boy; but still he made more fuss than one could expect from him over the infant, and was immensely pleased when he found that it was to be called Sophia, after his deceased wife. I was present when his son mentioned this, and I could see how his eyes softened and dwelt with increased fondness on the little creature; for all that he thought fit to suggest that perhaps its mother would rather name it after one of her own family—her mother or one of her sisters. ‘No,’ Mr. William said; ‘it was she who first proposed that it should bear his mother’s name.’ Then his father smiled, and said that he supposed there would be a great christening one of these days; to which the young gentleman answered laughingly that there would be time enough to think of that in months to come.’ ‘Oh, of course,’ Mr. Stone said; and the subject was dropped. I was more uneasy than ever after that, knowing that the young mother would not have her child baptized out of her own church. She had told me so, and that she intended to have it done at the first opportunity; but that, meantime, if it should be taken sick, or I thought it in any danger of death, I must tell

her immediately, so that it could be baptised at once. I promised her faithfully that I would, knowing that she was very anxious on this point, though for my own part I never could see any sense in infant baptism. But our Sophy was a pert little thing, in no danger of dying.

“She was only two weeks old when her grandfather was obliged to go a long journey. He received intelligence from England that his great uncle had recently died, leaving considerable property which he would inherit as next of kin, and that there were some matters relating to it which would require his personal attention. It was therefore necessary that he should start for England immediately. This news created no little emotion in our quiet household, as you may guess. Such a journey was a more serious undertaking at that time than now; and Mr. Stone felt little inclined for it, especially as he could not take his family. However, there was no help for it, and his preparations were speedily made. His son accompanied him to Philadelphia, and having seen him embarked on board the ship, returned home.

“Just about that time the Methodists in the village who had built a fine, large meeting-house, offered their old one for sale, and the Catholics concluded to buy it and fit it up for a chapel; they were not numerous nor rich enough to build a church, nor to support a pastor, but by having a place of worship they could get one of

the priests who traveled about the country as missionaries to hold service for them once a month. I heard all about it from young Mrs. Stone, who was as much interested in the plan as any body could be. Her husband gave a liberal sum towards it, and seemed almost as much delighted as she was, when it was finished; and every time service was held there he was sure to go with his wife. I thought at first that he only went to please her, but I soon learned that he had become a member of the church. If before this I had feared that trouble would grow out of this subject I was now sure of it, and I looked forward with dread to the time of Mr. Stone's return.

"He came at last, after an absence of just a year. He had found the business he had to attend to very perplexing and tedious, and after all several claimants had turned up, so that his share of the estate was not one quarter of what he had expected; indeed he considered it so trifling that he regretted having taken the trouble of going to England. However the voyage did him good. He was much more pleasant and sociable than of old, and played by the hour with his grandchild, just as he had formerly done with his twin daughters. I thought our bright little Sophy was very much like them in many of her pretty ways, and did not wonder that he made so much of her, and was so much more lively than he had been for years; but I mistrusted all the time that trouble would come upon

us ere long, and come it did, in the very third week after his return.

"It was just such a night as this, and at this time of the year, too. Mr. William had gone somewhere on business and would not return until a late hour. When the storm first began to come up we looked for him anxiously, hoping that he had started earlier than he had promised; but he came not, and as the storm grew more and more violent we all hoped that he had postponed his return till the next day, for the road by which he must come was a dangerous one to travel in the darkness and storm. As the hours wore on both his wife and his father grew more uneasy, and when the clock struck eleven she lighted her candle, and motioned me to bring the baby, who was fast asleep in my lap, up stairs. Her good-night to Mr. Stone was more than usually affectionate, but so sad that he held her hand kindly for awhile, and rallied her with affected cheerfulness on her solicitude; she smiled in return but sighed wearily as she turned away. When we reached her room she passed through it to a small one beyond, which she had fixed up prettily for what she called her oratory. There was a little table all covered with white at one end, with candles, and flowers, and and a crucifix, and a pretty statue of the Virgin Mary; and there were some fine pictures on the walls. 'Twas as pretty a little a room as need be, and here she was used to spend most of her leisure time, praying or read-

ing for there was a lot of religious books on some hanging shelves in one corner.

"She sat her lamp down in this room, and then came—and stood near me while I was laying Sophy in her little crib. Her hands were clasped together, and there was a look about her white face that made my heart ache for her. I put my hand on her shoulder and said as cheerfully as I could, 'My dear young lady, keep a brave heart—there is no fear that Mr. William will try to return to-night.'

"She threw herself into my arms, and burst into a fit of low sobbing. 'Something terrible is about to happen,' she said as soon as she could speak, 'I knew it—I feel it—and oh! if 'tis to my William——'

"She broke off with a sort of wild cry, and I had no words to comfort her, for I knew how useless it was to reason against that feeling of something going to happen, which comes upon a body at times. And how I pitied her, the poor young creature,—she was scarcely more than eighteen, and had never known sorrow or dread of it, before. Ah, well, it was coming to her now, though not the sorrow she dreaded.

"When she got calmer she took a little book I had often seen her read—the 'Following of Christ' it was called—and sat down to read. I told her she had best go to bed, but she said it would be no use, for she did not feel like going to sleep; so I left her reading and

went down stairs. Mr. Stone was still in the parlor. He seemed vexed that I had not stayed with his daughter; said that she was too anxious and excited to be left to herself. I told him she seemed to prefer being alone. He made no reply, but sat thoughtfully with his head resting on his hand, while I set the chairs back in their places, and attended to the fire. The storm which had been for some time abating, broke forth again, wilder and fiercer than ever, and Mr. Stone jumped up and saying something about the poor girl being scared to death, went up stairs. I hurried after him, saying that I would go, for I dreaded to have him see *that* room; but without heeding me he kept on, and knocked at her chamber door. There was no answer, indeed no sound could be heard for the storm, so he opened the door, and guided by the light went forward to the little oratory. I stood on the threshold of the outer room, trembling in every limb. I saw his first look of surprise give place to one of fearful rage, his face became of an ashy whiteness, and his eyes burned like living coals. He set his teeth hard together, as if to keep back bitter words, and turned his back on the room and its occupant.

At that instant, as ill-luck would have it, Mr. William bounded up the stairs. He sprang into his apartment, calling merrily for Jennie, when he was suddenly confronted by the enraged father. I heard Mr.

Stone's voice raised in tones of terrible anger. I saw the quick, startled glance which the son gave from him to the young creature who now came forward with her child in her arms. She was very pale, and I could see that she trembled nervously, but she looked not timid or frightened as I had expected. Her eyes brightened as she beheld her husband, and then she turned and gazed upon the angry father with a look of gentle dignity, of calm, unshrinking firmness that surprised me. I could not understand the words that were spoken, for the noise of the storm was deafening, and I stood outside the room! but their meaning was plain enough to me; and I knew when Mr. William avowed his own change of religion, for his father glared at him in speechless rage, and fell heavily into a seat as if the revelation had bereft him of all strength. Just then there was a lull in the storm and the silence seemed appalling. Mr. William took the infant from its mother's arms, and knelt before the father, holding the little innocent towards him as if for a peace-offering. He thrust it fiercely aside while he howled rather than spoke, a bitter curse upon the son who had so wronged him.

"O father, recall that curse!" pleaded the young man; "for my mother's sake recall it, my father."

"Never call me by that name again. I discard you—I disown you and yours forever!" O how bitterly the words were spoken; it seemed as if he would

put all his hatred into each one; and how we all shuddered, and the young wife screamed as lifting his arm to Heaven he added slowly: "May sorrow and misfortune of every kind dog your footsteps through life, and may your children wring your heart even as you have wrung mine."

"With these words he turned away, caring little for the anguish he had inflicted on those two innocent young creatures. Ah! it was a sorrowful sight, the last night that Mr. William was to spend in his boyhood home. Early the next morning he received a message from his father, telling him that he desired his house to be at once relieved of the presence of the vipers he had foolishly cherished. Before night he was left to the solitude he desired. It was sad to me to see the young couple, with their sweet babe, turned out of doors; I missed them at every turn. And to think of the life of hardship that was before them,

"They went to New York; Mr. Graham was about setting his son up in business, and it was thought a good plan to have the two young men begin together. But it proved to be a bad one. Mr. William was willing to do all in his power, but then he had no knowledge of business at all, and no natural turn for it; while his brother-in-law was reckless and extravagant, caring nothing for the business save as it supplied the money he wanted to squander. So it turned out as one might see from the first. The business proved a

failure, and a great loss to Mr. Graham, and, of course, Mr. William had the whole blame of it, and was ever after spoken of by his wife's family, as a weak, useless fellow—there was no good in trying to help him along. He got a clerkship after that, but the salary was small, and the work very confining. His health had been failing for a long time, what with the change from his mountain home to the crowded place like New York, and the constant worry of business to one never accustomed to any care; and at last the doctor told him that he was threatened with consumption, needed change of air, and total freedom from care and work.

“He came home, poor fellow, thinking that his father would relent, or at any rate, see that his family did not come to want. He took lodgings in the village, and at nightfall set off for his old home. I was alone in the sitting-room when he entered, I did not know him. How could I think that the feeble, care-worn man was once the handsome, joyous William Stone! But one look at the pretty child he led by the hand seemed to bring the old times before me, and I knew that my favorite had come home to die; none could fail to see that he was far gone in consumption. There was more sorrow than joy in our meeting. He was not able to talk much, for the journey had taken a good deal of his strength, and he was agitated by the thought of seeing his father, and by thinking of the good or evil that was to come of that meeting. He went into

the library, taking the two children who, as he naturally thought, would have some influence with his father. For how could he help taking to his heart the bright-eyed boy of two years, who looked, indeed, the rightful heir of that fine old place? And the girl, a thoughtful, gentle-looking child of eight years, so much resembled her grandmother that the father thought as I did, surely the stubborn man must yield to the feelings which the sight of her would at once awaken. Alas! how little we knew him, after all.

“I waited anxiously enough for Mr. William to come back. Sometimes I made myself believe that all would come right now, that Mr. Stone would be glad to keep his unexpected visitors with him, and would send to the village for his daughter-in-law and the other three children. But the more I thought of it the more unlikely it seemed, for he had not appeared to soften in the least during the years that had passed since his son last crossed that threshold, and if he continued unforgiving, what was to become of that sickly man and his little family? I walked about the room thinking of all this, and hardly able to keep from going into the library to add my prayers to his, though this would do more harm than good; but when he came back, I knew in a minute that all hope was gone. He was terribly cast down, he had built so much on this interview, and the disappointment was trying to him, weak and miserable as he was. I made him rest for

awhile on the sofa, and brought him some refreshments which he was very unwilling to taste, but I persisted knowing that he was sadly in need of something to strengthen him. It was not until he stood up to go that he spoke of his father.

"I told him all," he said in a whisper, looking sorrowfully at his children as he spoke; "I besought him at least to take pity on them—I received no answer no look save one of scorn when I first began—when I was coming away this was written and pushed towards me."

"I looked at the scrap of paper—what do you think it was, Gracie?"

"A check for a large amount, of course; what else could it be?" rejoined Grace in an eager tone.

The housekeeper shook her head mournfully. "The words on the paper were these:"

"My curse is following you—it is the only gift or legacy you or your children will ever receive from me."

"Oh, mother Dora!" cried the horror-stricken girl.

"Yes, my dear, that was what the stern old father wrote, and he wrote it in his firmest, plainest handwriting."

"Oh the unfeeling monster; he was worse than a murderer. Did he ever say anything to you about his son?"

"That he did the very next morning. He warned me to hold no intercourse with these persons who had lately come to the village; he would allow no one in his house to hold any communication with them directly or indirectly. This he said in a tone I did not relish, I was not used to having him address me in such a manner. And I had promised Mr. William that I would go to see his wife the very first time I went to the village; I was longing to see her and the children—Sophy most of all—and I had no notion of being hampered by 'orders' and 'warnings.' I told Mr. Stone so, and being now on the subject I told him, also, how odd it seemed to me, that one who would scorn to do a cruel or unjust thing to the meanest creature alive, could be both cruel and unjust to his own flesh and blood; I spoke up what had been in my mind for many a day; a very foolish thing no doubt, but I was so worked up I couldn't help it. The upshot was that we parted. I went to live with my daughter in the village, and he got another housekeeper."

"I am so glad!" interrupted Grace, impulsively, "How often he must have missed you and wished you back again. I am glad he didn't have that comfort. But tell me more about poor Mr. William—did he die?"

"Yes, my dear, he died, not for some time, though, nearly a year, if I remember right. He was so patient and so cheerful with all his trials that the disease did not hurry him off as it does some."

"And his father would not do anything for them?—How on earth did they get along?"

"Poor enough, Grace, poor enough. He got some writing to do for a lawyer while his strength lasted, and his wife took in sewing; she was a fine hand at any kind of needlework, and well it was for her, for what would have become of them otherwise!"

"What a comfort it was to the poor lady to have you living in the village,"

"Yes; I was able to be a good deal with her, and to help her some; not so much as I would have liked, for most of my savings went when my daughter got married, and afterward in presents or one way or other, so that at that time I had next to nothing. If I ever wanted riches it was then; and if I ever had real hard thoughts of any human being, it was of the rich man who would not send help even in an underhand way to them that needed it sorely. Often, too, when I passed the little Catholic church I was vexed to think how much trouble it had been the means of bringing to us, and once I could not help saying that I wished there was no such religion in the world. But Mr. William assured me that he never even for an instant regretted the sacrifice he had made, and, indeed, I could see that his religion was a great comfort to him, as it was to his wife, in all their troubles."

Grace would fain hear something more of "the widow and orphans," but her companion became suddenly reserved and would tell no more.

CHAPTER V.

Two Sorts of Kindness.

"The gentle mind by gentle deeds is known."

She hath a natural, wise sincerity,
A simple truthfulness, and these have lent her
A dignity as moveless as the centre.—*Lowell.*

The unexpected return of Mr. Althorpe to his long, deserted home, could not fail to create a sensation in the neighborhood. The almost forgotten story connected with Oakdale was again, as of old, the general topic of conversation in the village; reminiscences of the discarded son were industriously revived; his widow and children became once more objects of general attention, and the old gentleman's cruel abandonment of them to a life of toil and poverty was the theme of every circle.

Among those to whom the subject was new, and therefore especially interesting, was the Mrs. Walters to whom allusion has already been made. This lady was the wife of a merchant who, becoming unfortunate in business, had lately removed from the city to the mountain village where, on his small income, his family could be supported in comfort and respectability. Mr. Walters, wearied with the alternations of fortune and the feverish excitement attendant on his former life, was charmed with his rural home. Not so his

wife, a gay, worldly woman who had been wont to declare that "fashionable amusements were as necessary to her existence as the air she breathed." The want of society—the total deprivation of pleasure, of excitement, of anything that could give a zest to life—rendered her new home—comfortable and even elegant as it was pronounced by those of her former friends who visited it—intolerable. She never wearied of bewailing her "banishment," and was particularly pathetic when lamenting the hard fate of her eldest daughter, who, "instead of moving as a belle in the society which her beauty and accomplishments were so well calculated to adorn, was condemned to the *ennui* of a wretched country village."

Eva Walters, however, perversely declined falling a victim to *ennui*. At the time of the family's removal from Philadelphia, she had not been formally introduced to the gay world; she did not miss its elegant modes of killing time; and being much of her father's disposition, she persisted, with what her mother deemed an ungrateful want of sympathy, in finding happiness and enjoyment in this out-of-the-world region. Mrs. Walters vainly combatted her ridiculous notions; and when to her inexpressible delight, Eva was "engaged" to a gentleman whose wealth and position would place the dear child in the sphere for which she was born, even then her joy was marred by the eccentricity of the bride

elect, who declared that her trousseau should be the work of Mrs. Althorpe, the village dressmaker, instead of being made by Madame this, or Mademoiselle that, which her mother thought "indispensably necessary."

Mr. Walters thought "Eva's idea was a sensible one; it was always more convenient and satisfactory to have work done near home than to be sending to a distance; and beside it was only right to spend one's money in one's own neighborhood. As for the latest styles it was easy enough to get them—Mrs. Harding would send them from the city."

And Mrs. Walters finally yielded the point, admitting that, "the dressmaker really seemed to understand her trade well, and showed considerable taste in the matter of trimmings."

She could not, however, be induced to yield to her daughter's next suggestion, that Miss Althorpe should be her companion in a visit she was about making to some of her father's relations, who lived on the coast of New Jersey. Mrs. Walters was horrified by the proposition. It was bad enough to have Eva going off to spend a month with vulgar country people, instead of accompanying their dear old friend, Mrs. Harding, to Nahant, as she had particularly requested; but if she must go she should not have the company of a dress-maker—a seamstress! What mattered it if the girl was delicate-looking, as Eva pleadingly urged, and

would derive so much benefit from the salt water air?—she was nothing to them. Mrs. Walters hoped she knew better how to keep up the dignity of her family in their changed fortunes, than to allow any of them to associate with persons of an inferior class.

Eva was reluctantly compelled to abandon her pet scheme. She felt a deep interest in the widow's family, and particularly in the pale, fragile Sophia, who stood as much in need of the relaxation which circumstances denied her. It was solely on her account and to gratify Mr. Walters, that the generous girl had decided to visit her relatives in New Jersey instead of making one of Mrs. Harding's gay party to Nahant, and she was so much disappointed that she ceased to feel any interest in the preparations for her pleasure trip. Fortunately on the very day that she had intended to start, Mrs. Walters changed her opinion and consented to have Sophia invited to accompany her daughter. She had become acquainted with the history of the Althorpes, and their relationship to the wealthy owner of Oakdale, made a vast change in her estimate of the "dressmaker's family." It was not at all likely, she thought, that the old gentleman would always remain inexorable; time, sickness, some unexpected incident, would cause him to receive his son's family; or he might die intestate, and thus they would recover their rights; in that case an acquaintance with Mrs. Althorpe

would be very desirable, so that in view of what might occur, it was as well not to lose an opportunity of doing an act of kindness which might pave the way for future intimacy,—and really the widow was a very lady-like person, and her children handsome and well-bred. Thus Mrs. Walters reconciled herself to a step which she had lately pronounced disgraceful, and willingly assented to Eva postponing her departure for a few days, in order that she might have the companionship she desired. And Eva hastened to impart her plan to the Althorpes.

"My dear Mrs. Althorpe, I am going to run away with Sophia for a few weeks. I fancy a sight of the ocean would do her good, and as I am going to one of the most lonesome places in the world, I must take her along for company. No objection, now, for I won't listen to a word of it," she went on with sportive imperiousness, as she saw by Sophy's face which had at first flushed with delighted surprise that a sober second thought on the score of expenses would lead her to refuse. "You must be ready to go with me on Monday—must she not, Mrs. Althorpe? We don't have to make any preparations, for we're only going to a little settlement where they know nothing of fashion or style but think people are quite presentable when they have their face and hands washed, and their clothes whole and tidy. You needn't laugh, Sophia; that's the sort,

of folks Aunt Debby has for neighbors; and its just the place where we can enjoy ourselves and feel at home. So we start early on Monday; and remember to pack up some working materials, for we shall take an industrious fit, I fancy, now and then, and it will be so romantic to take our work-baskets down by the sounding sea."

Sophia's objections were quickly overcome, and the young ladies started on their trip with joyous anticipations, which were so well verified that their stay was prolonged to nearly double the specified time, and Sophia, to her friend's great satisfaction, derived even more benefit by her holiday than had been anticipated. Tears and smiles welcomed her back to the little home-circle that had daily missed her gentle presence, and while all crowded round her with eager inquiries and congratulations on her looking so well, Willie had his arms clasped about her as tightly as if he feared she was about to be spirited away in some mysterious manner, and vehemently protested that she "should never go away again—Willie could not let Sophy go any more."

"No fear of Sophy going again, pet," said his sister, fondly caressing the affectionate child, "though it is worth while to go for awhile for the sake of getting such a welcome back."

Yes, the trip had been of wonderful service to Sophia, and from the fond mother's heart arose many a grateful prayer for her whose thoughtful kindness had been the means of bringing back the bloom of health to the young creature who now, with fresh energy and spirit, worked industriously in order to make up for lost time, beguiling the hours of toil by recounting all the little incidents connected with the journey which was so pleasant an interruption to the monotony of her life.

Mrs. Walters, in pursuance of her line of policy now treated the Althorpes' with great friendliness, and showed a particular partiality for Willie, inviting him to her house, and rendering his visits so pleasant that he was always very willing to repeat them. This degree of favor shown to the child of a dressmaker (a name, by the way, which Mrs. Walters no longer applied to Mrs. Althorpe,) was the more remarkable inasmuch as the city lady considered the villagers quite beneath her friendly notice, and was only "civil" in a reserved way even to the few families whose circumstances were equal, if not superior, to her own. Her husband noticed it, and was informed that Willie was rightfully the heir of Oakland, and was therefore, a fit companion for *their* children.

"And they are so fond of him," continued the politic lady, "especially little Myra, It is charming to see

those two children together; both so beautiful, so interesting, and so devoted to each other."

The lady's enthusiastic tone caused her husband to look up hastily, with an air of mingled vexation and mirthfulness.

"Clementine, it is not possible that you are beginning to exercise your talent for match-making in behalf of those babies!"

"They will grow older and larger, I presume," was answered drily.

"Undoubtedly, if their lives are spared. But by the time the young gentleman of eight and the young lady of five, reach the years of discretion, I fear they will have little inclination for carrying out your pretty programme. Perhaps if you were to have a solemn betrothal——"

"Don't be absurd, Mr. Walters," interrupted his wife.

"I'faith the *absurdness* is not all on my side," said Mr Walters laughing heartily as he turned to the perusal of his newspaper.

Mrs. Walters had another scheme which she did not think proper to divulge to her husband while its success was uncertain.

Late in the fall, Mrs. Althorpe went, by particular request, to spend the day with her new acquaintance, and was there introduced to the rich and fashionable Mrs. Harding, who was now making a farewell visit to

her dear friend, being about to remove to one of the principal cities of South America, where her husband held the office of U. S. Consul.

Mrs. Harding expressed herself charmed to make the acquaintance of Mrs. Althorpe, and professed to feel for her a regard which would have been quite flattering only that the object of it could not help suspecting that it was acted for some purpose. She was not mistaken, for immediately after dinner Mrs. Harding began to speak of her husband's immense wealth, and, lamenting in the most pathetic manner, their want of an heir, and finally startled Mrs. Althorpe by proposing to adopt her Willie. He was such a sweet child; she had seen him several times, and had actually become so attached to him that it seemed as if she could not go to her new home without him; she would be to him the best and fondest of mothers, and as for her husband, she knew he would fairly idolize the child,—oh, with him their home would be indeed, a paradise. The advantages which would accrue to the child were then duly set forth, and the criminal selfishness of withholding them fully dwelt upon. And after Mrs. Harding had exhausted her stock of arguments and entreaties, Mrs. Walters came to her aid, reiterating and confirming all that her friend had said, with sundry pathetic additions of her own which she fondly dreamed would prove irresistible, and wound up by declaring that she only wished Mrs. Harding would

take a fancy to one of her little ones—she would not keep it back from such good fortune for the world, but unluckily—this was said laughingly—her children were not handsome enough to strike her friend's fancy. Mrs. Walters had imagined that the maternal vanity of her auditor would be touched by this, and dispose her to take the case into consideration; but Mrs. Althorpe was proof against flattery and bribes, and was not even moved when her hostess declared that she could not bear to see such good fortune lost to her favorite—that she felt scarcely less interest in the lovely boy than in one of her own children.

The mother was, of course, gratified by the interest expressed for her child, but still felt constrained to reject the offer, which she did with a courteous firmness, a gentle dignity of manner, that the two friends could not help respecting, despite their rising indignation. Finding all their solicitations vain, the matter was finally dropped.

The disappointment and anger of Mrs. Walters were extreme. She had set her heart on this project—she now told her husband. As Mrs. Harding was determined to adopt some interesting child before departing for South America, she had determined to secure this good luck for Willie Althorpe.

"For whom baby Myra is destined," interrupted her husband. "Very thoughtful of you, my dear; you

display quite a motherly fondness for that little chap. It is to be hoped that he will prove a good son-in-law."

"He shall come here no more. I am done with the Althorpes, old and young." Mrs. Walters looked severely at her eldest daughter as she spoke. "Kindness is quite thrown away on such people. When the work they have now in hand is finished they shall have no more from this house. They are so very independent we shall see how they will make out without help. Just to think that Mrs. Harding even intimated to that obstinate woman, in the most delicate manner too, that she would put them in immediate possession of that beautiful little farm she owns just beyond the village. It would support her and her daughter in comfort, without their ever working at their trade again."

"And she refused to sell her child for that beautiful little farm!—shocking!"

Without heeding her husband's irony Mrs. Walters went on. "I had suggested this to our friend, and she was quite willing to give it, would have transferred the title-deed to them without delay. Think what a fine thing it would have been for those two girls! And the farm is almost close to Oakdale. Suppose the old gentleman ever does divide his property among his grandchildren, (which I hope he won't,) what an advantage that would be. Well, it is no use to try to do

a kindness for some people—they never appreciate it. But if I don't make that obstinate creature regret that she refused Mrs. Harding's generous offer, it will be for want of an opportunity."

From that day Mrs. Althorpe and her daughters lost "the friendship" of Mrs. Walters, and were spoken of by her more contemptuously than ever as "dressmakers and seamstresses."

CHAPTER VI.

How time passed at Oakdale.

"O, blest with temper whose unclouded ray
Will make to-morrow cheerful as to-day."

"Well, if this isn't the slowest sort of life! Why, Gracie, how do you get along here, anyhow? You might just as well be buried alive."

"Not by any means, Alf," was the laughing reply. "This place is a good deal more pleasant to my fancy than a home underground."

"Own up, now, Grace, isn't it awful lonely here? Don't you ever feel it so?"

Grace was silent.

"Ah, you can't deny it! What's the use of your trying to humbug *me*? You know you're tired to death of this place."

"No, indeed; you are quite mistaken, Alfred," said his sister earnestly, "I like Oakdale very much. It is lonesome here sometimes——"

"*Sometimes!*" interrupted Alfred, "I'll bet a dollar no one ever comes near the place—no visitor I mean."

Alfred watched his sister closely, and nodded with a triumphant air of "I knew it," when he found his supposition was correct.

"The village is near enough; don't you ever go there?"

"Yes, to church, sometimes."

"Every Sunday?"

"No."

"See here, Gracie, what's got into you? You're not half as lively or talkative as you used to be. But that is not strange after all, shut up as you've been for a year with two old muffs. No, you needn't try to hush me up. I see just how it is. There's that old codger shut up all the time in his library——"

"Not all the time, I assure you, Alf."

"Only five-fifths of it then, as one of our dull fellows in fractions would say. And anyhow, *he's* no company. How can you get along without ever seeing anybody, or going anywhere?"

"I do see plenty of people," said Grace smiling.

"Yes on the road, half a mile off."

"And I often ride out with uncle Althorpe."

"Among the woods and mountains."

"Well, I am sure that is much more pleasant than through the narrow streets of a country town."

"But why have you never got acquainted with any of the village folks, Grace?—that's what puzzles me. I mean to ask that old hermit about it—ask him if he's lived all his life in this place without knowing any of the neighbors."

"You'll do nothing of the kind, Alfred. Surely uncle has a right to do as he pleases, and if he does

not wish company we have no right to force him to have it."

"If I come to spend another vacation here I'll bring company along, I bet you. But I guess I won't come. I'll go home with some of the fellows, or stay at the college—tisn't half so bad as being poked up here. But do tell me how you manage to get along—I can't see how you can stand it."

"Stand what, you teasing boy?"

"Don't go to chaffing a fellow, now, sis; you know well enough what I mean."

"Well, Alfred, it is rather lonesome here sometimes, I acknowledge; but I don't allow myself to think about it."

"How can you help thinking of it, I'd like to know."

"I always manage to keep busy."

"Busy! doing what?"

"Oh, plenty of things. I have the poultry to feed and the garden to attend to, and the parlor to keep in order; and sometimes I run into the kitchen to help Mrs Wilson with her baking. And then I have my music to practice, and my sketching—I haven't shown you my portfolio, have I? It is nearly full, there are so many beautiful scenes in this neighborhood."

"Miss Grace! Miss Grace! your uncle wants you in the library?" called out Hannah at that moment, and Grace hastened to obey the summons, glad of an opportune interruption to questions which she could neither evade nor answer satisfactorily.

For she felt it to be true as her brother declared that life was "a dull heavy affair" at Oakdale; though with her cheerful, sunny temperament she tried to make the best of it. There was no family circle, with its little world of hopes and fears, joys and griefs, plans and arrangements—no round of duties, either of an irksome or pleasant nature, to fill the hours—nothing to bring the various powers of the soul, for enjoyment or for endurance, into action. The days passed on with unvarying sameness, neither lengthened by trouble nor shortened by joy; weeks and months crept slowly by, unmarked by any incident, undisturbed by any emotion. To one weary of earth's struggles and longing only for rest, this calm, uneventful mode of life in which, if there was nothing to anticipate there was also nothing to regret, would have been most welcome; but to a young buoyant spirit, waiting—

"Where the brook and river meet,
Womanhood and childhood meet?"—

ready to plume its untried wings for an adventurous flight, and eager to solve for itself the great problem of life with all its varied joys and cares, such an existence could not at times fail to be unutterably wearisome.

Grace, notwithstanding her efforts to forget the lonesomeness and monotony "by being always busy with her self-imposed occupations," could not help feeling the burden of her stagnant existence, and would have felt

it more only for the good-natured and loquacious housekeeper, to whose dominions she was always welcome.

"Dear mother Wilson, how fortunate it was for me that you came here; what should I do without you?" she would exclaim in her affectionate way to the good dame, who would rejoin with a laugh,

"I guess there's two of us fortunate, for I don't see how I could get along without you; it would be horrid lonesome for me, unless I was to keep Hannah from school, and that's a thing I wouldn't like to do; so it's well we can be company for each other, Grace."

It was, indeed, well for Grace, who otherwise, as she used to declare merrily, "would not have had a soul to speak to for days together." Sam, the coachman and general manager of affairs, had from the first, manifested unfriendly feeling for the two whom he looked upon as usurpers where they had no claim; and all the young girl's ingenuity could not win him "to talk," even when they were working together in the garden,—his vocabulary seemed limited to such questions as "Where'll you have this put, ma'am?" or "Want anything more done now, ma'am?" to Grace's secret amusement. Next she tried the farmer and his wife, but they were new importations from "Faderland," whose broken English was not yet intelligible enough to be interesting or amusing.

As for the master of the house he was seldom visible save at meal times, and he would sometimes keep him-

self secluded for days; while his silent grave demeanor was gradually changing into a morose gloom which awed Grace at the same time that it excited her pitying sympathy. She had indulged a pleasant dream of filling a daughter's place to Uncle Althorpe, enlivening his solitary life by her cares, spending her days and evenings by his side, talking, reading, singing, as he chose. But this anticipation was quickly dispelled. The misanthropic old man was sufficient unto himself, seldom requiring of her any service, or expressing a wish for her society, and a few polite but decided rebuffs during her first month at Oakdale sufficed to prevent her intruding, unasked, on his solitude. Grateful for his kindness to herself and her brother, drawn towards him by that peculiar feeling always entertained for one who has been known to have loved and lost, the young girl yearned to give him a daughter's love; but her affection was repelled by his manner which, though sufficiently kind to make her feel that he wished her to regard him as her guardian, and Oakdale as her home, checked all manifestations of her warm feeling.

It seemed as strange to Grace as to her brother that no visitors ever came to Oakdale: It was in a populous neighborhood surrounded by fine farms and country residences, and within easy access of the country town, as well as of several thriving villages; yet had their home been in a wilderness they could scarcely have been more isolated from their fellow creatures.

This was not the fault of the neighbors as Grace had at first conjectured, for during the drives they occasionally took, she noticed that Mr. Althorpe received many neighborly salutations which he returned courteously, yet with a manner that discouraged any attempts to enter into a conversation. Many glances, curious or friendly, were directed to the youthful stranger on these occasions, but the old gentleman never gave the introduction which it was evident some of the parties desired. Indeed he had intimated to Grace that he did not wish her to form any acquaintance in the neighborhood. The feeling of restraint this naturally produced, rendered her averse to going into the village except when she was with him, or on very rare occasions when Mrs. Wilson would take a fancy to go to church, "it not seeming right to spend every Sabbath at home."

The housekeeper was not a church-going woman, nor had Grace ever "joined church," or "become "a professor " However she adhered faithfully to the practice acquired in childhood, of saying a few prayers and reading a chapter in the Bible every day, and she had a vague notion of being "accepted through faith in Christ," since she did no harm, and rested all her hopes of salvation on the "atonement" once plenteously made "for all mankind." This was the extent of Grace Morton's religion; nor was it strange that it seemed satisfactory to her, since so many "rational" men and wo-

men of mature years, who would not choose the simplest ornament without due deliberation and comparison, content themselves with the same shadowy "hope" in a matter on which their eternal destiny depends.

The second year of Grace's residence at Oakdale was drawing to a close. Alfred sent word that he intended to spend the coming vacation with one of his fellow-students, a determination which greatly displeased his guardian, who, pitying the young girl's disappointment, half jestingly proposed that they should go to the — Springs for the remainder of the summer. He was surprised by the eager delight with which she received the proposition. So contented had she always seemed, that he had thought she would profess an equal willingness to go or to remain at home: but what girl of eighteen could be indifferent on such a question? In a flutter of joyous excitement Grace ran to tell the housekeeper of the good news, who sympathised fully in her delighted anticipations of the pleasure in store for her. Sundry feminine anxieties on the subject of dress mingled with her pleasing visions of enjoyment, but two or three visits to the county-town, during which her uncle's purse was opened with a liberality that surprised as much as it delighted her, put these anxieties to flight, and at the close of a fortnight she was able to announce herself prepared to start as soon as her uncle wished.

CHAPTER VII.

At the Springs.

"Enjoy the spring of life and youth;
To some good angel leave the rest."

There was a charming society gathered that summer at the — Springs. Every age and condition of life seemed to be there favorably represented. There was cheerful matronhood, surrounded by many children, bright wreaths of living blossoms,—and blooming maidenhood, devoid of coquetry and affectation,—and youthful manhood, exulting in the consciousness of its powers, and blending with its new-born dignity the sportiveness and enthusiasm of boyhood. There were "professional men," and "men of business," breaking away from the tread-mill routine of their daily lives, and calling the varied talents and energies of their working world into play, to add to the amusements of the passing hour. There were some who had "paused midway up the hill," to rally the exhausted powers of body and mind for a fresh start, and others who had borne the burden and heat of the day, and now rested from their toils, and were ministered to by those who, in their turn, were pressing forward to take their places on life's busy stage. And there were a few whose names were as "household words" throughout the length and breadth of fair America. There was the man of science, whose profound erudition had won him admission to the learned circles of older lands;—

and the poet, whose magic strains had touched the popular heart—and the orator, whose witching eloquence had swayed whole multitudes as the mighty wind sways the forest branches—and the gifted statesman and patriot to whom all turned with a glow of pride, exulting in the proud laurel wreath which fame was twining for the brow of “the Keystone’s favorite son,” and all unconscious of the thorns with which that glittering crown would be thickly set.

And all—the great and the lowly—the tourist in search of the picturesque—the invalid in quest of health—all mingling together with that easy familiarity which constitutes the charm of social intercourse; all willing to please and to be pleased, and determined to extract the greatest amount of pleasure from their holiday among the mountains. Even the gloomy spirit of Mr. Althorpe caught the prevailing tone, and his ward found that he could be just like other people.

“You cannot imagine how he has changed,” she wrote to the housekeeper; “sometimes I can scarcely believe that it is really uncle Althorpe whom I see laughing and chatting with one gay group and another, or conversing by the hour together with the distinguished men who are the lions of the springs just now. And about these same great personages, as you know, mother Dora, that, although I was delighted to have a chance to see those about whom I had heard and read so often, still I stood in great awe of them at

first,—it seemed almost like impertinence to talk with them as one would with other people. But they are quite sociable and talkative, I find, and as fond of frolic and amusement as any of us commonplace folks. I can see that uncle’s opinions have great weight with them, and that they sometimes refer to him to settle some disputed point. Senator —— told me last evening that he had rarely met with one whose information was so extensive and so thorough—that he seems perfectly at home on all questions of science, literature, or politics. You can judge how pleased uncle was when I repeated to him this compliment of our noble statesman. I am not sure, though, that he was as proud of it as I was, and as you will be. We can forgive him for leading the life of a recluse, can we not, mother Dora, when such are its results?”

As for Grace herself, she was, to quote from another part of the same letter, “a thousand times happier than she had ever dreamed of being.” What, indeed, could this scene be to her but one of enchantment?

Enjoying all the prestige attached to her supposed relationship to the richest man of —— county, beautiful, talented and accomplished, she became at once the star of “the goodlie company,” while the sunny cheerfulness of her disposition, and the winning charm of her manners, easy and unaffected, because she had not ambition to appear better or higher than she was, ren-

dered her society welcome alike to old and young, grave and gay.

If Grace had been surprised at the discovery of Mr. Althorpe's conversational powers, still greater was his astonishment on beholding this sudden transformation in one whom he would have described as a very amiable young lady, sufficiently pretty and pleasing, but not at all calculated to attract general admiration. It might have been from the effect of a becoming toilette, but it certainly seemed to him, now that his attention was drawn to her by the admiration she excited, that his ward was uncommonly handsome. He only wondered that the fact had never struck him until now. Her features were of the regular Grecian cast; the rich tints of youth and health on her smooth, round cheeks contrasted beautifully with the lily-like fairness of her complexion; there was light enough in her large dark eyes to have made the plainest face beautiful; and no coronet could be more glorious or becoming than the luxuriant braids of rich brown hair that crowned her well-poised head. The studies to which most of her time had lately been devoted had matured a naturally fine intellect, giving a nobleness to her aspect, and an expression of intellectual superiority to her countenance which might have seemed unsuited to her years, had they not been relieved by the feminine grace of her deportment, and the merry sparkle of her radiant eyes. Her figure, rather above the middle height, and finely

formed, was well set off by the flounced barege robe that fell around her in soft, wavy folds, like an azure cloud.

Yes, Grace Morton was undeniably beautiful, and having suddenly made this discovery her uncle gave her his arm with an air of even more than his usual courteousness; and they joined the throng that was gathering round the dinner table. There were some new arrivals; among them two persons who attracted general notice, though the sensation created by each was of a widely different nature.

One was a good-looking country dame, evidently well satisfied with herself and her position in life, and having a comfortable conviction that she was dressed as well as the best. Her dumpy form was arrayed in a tight fitting dress of reddish-brown silk made in the fashion of a by-gone era; her short fat neck was encircled by a well-stretched collar of "worked" cambric fastened with a large bow of bright yellow ribbon, and was farther adorned by two rounds of heavy gold guard chain. Her hair of mingled black and grey was put up in wonderful bows over each temple, and surmounted by a cap with puffed crown, and box-plaited border of imitation lace, plentifully supplied with loops, and bows, and ends of pink ribbon. A netted bag of unusual size hung on her arm; and she carried in one hand a red silk handkerchief, and in the other a

palm-leaf fan which were alternately employed in "drying" and "cooling" her fat, ruddy-colored face.

"Dear me!" she ejaculated as she settled herself and her dress to her satisfaction in the seat next to Grace, "Dear me! its a melting day, ain't it, Miss?"

Grace, not a little amused by her odd appearance and manners, replied with due seriousness.

"What a sight of people!" continued the stranger, stopping the vigorous exercise of her fan, and bobbing backwards and forwards to get a good view up and down the table.

"A great many," assented Grace mechanically, her attention at that moment drawn to a gentleman who had just taken the opposite seat.

His features were not remarkable for regularity or classical outline; but the well-shaped head with masses of dark wavy hair thrown carelessly back from the lofty brow on which "thought sat enthroned," and the large clear eyes full of fire and intelligence, gave the beholder the impression of genius, and most persons would have pronounced him "a strikingly handsome man." He was about five and twenty years old; tall and symmetrical in form, and with the self-reliant air of one conscious of possessing physical, moral and intellectual power. Yet withal there was nothing of arrogance or offensive haughtiness in his bearing which, proud and stately as it was, had that indescribable

charm which makes the polished gentleman. You could see that whatever might be his faults his character was intrinsically noble and generous, full of scorn for anything like meanness, defiant of all obstacles or dangers, ready with equal pride "to lead a forlorn hope" or mount the scaffold in unshrinking devotion to any cause he espoused.

He was just the sort of person to "take captive the roving fancy" of a young, imaginative girl, and Grace unconsciously gazed upon him while recollections of sundry heroes of romances and of history darted through her mind; when to her inexpressible confusion the brilliant orbs which had been leisurely surveying the assembled guests suddenly turned upon her, their careless expression changing instantaneously to one of earnest admiration which, respectful as it was, brought the flush of maiden modesty to her cheek and brow. Grace had not yet acquired—it was doubtful if she ever would acquire the hardihood of the finished belle. She tried to hide her embarrassment by making some remark to her uncle, but gave little heed to his reply for just then the stranger spoke, and few and simple as were his words, the clear articulation and full, rich tone attracted her attention.

"Allow me to help you, madam." These were the words and looking up she found that they were addressed to the country lady who was making eager efforts to reach the bread.

"Thank ye—'twas furdur off than I thought, or else my arm's shorter," was the reply. "Here, young man, (to the waiter) take away this soup—I'm no hand at soup any time—and bring me something to eat, I'm despret hungry, that's a fact; been travelling since daylight yesterday."

This was directed to the company within hearing, but the waiter interposed to call her attention to the bill of fare.

"Well, I can't make head or tail of this thing," said she after adjusting her spectacles and glancing up and down the paper in utter confusion. "Here! what's this here?" pointing to the list and slowly reading aloud just as it was spelled, *Pommes-de-terre-a-la-Rouenaise*.—"Jest fetch me some of that.—What else? Jest you bring that along and then I'll see. I dare say it's some outlandish thing, but I'm bound to try it anyhow.—Why law me—its nothing on earth but potatoes!"—looking with a horrified expression at the plate which the grinning waiter set before her. "Well, I *am* beat now!"

By this time the observation of guests and waiters had been drawn to the loquacious dame, and all were struggling, more or less successfully, to control their merriment. She looked again at the tantalizing bill of fare, gave a keen glance at Grace and abruptly pushed it toward her.

"See here, Miss—you look like a nice sensible girl, and like's not you can read that off just as easy as a-b-ab's; put it into English for me will you?—so's I can get a mouthful of dinner."

Grace smilingly complied with the request, and the hungry lady having made her selection was soon gratified by the sight of a liberal supply of ham and vegetables, which to the horror of some of the more fastidious lookers-on, disappeared in an incredibly short space of time. Then with an audible remark that "they had real good vittals there anyway," she had recourse to her red silk handkerchief to wipe off the perspiration that was trickling down her fat cheeks, after which the fan was again put in vigorous motion.

"Jest you let that plate rest—I'm not through with my dinner yet," she exclaimed, laying a firm grasp on the plate which one of the waiters was about to remove.

"Let's see—I'll try something else now, I think," and she peeped over her spectacles at the plates of those next to her.

"This roast beef is very fine," remarked the stranger from across the table, "I would recommend you to try some of it."

"Well, I don't care if I do, long's as you recommend it. You see I was here once before, but that was nigh onto ten year ago, and they had none of these here new-fangled ways then;—pokin' play-bills in furrin

languages under a body's nose, 'stead of puttin' the dishes on the table, and letting a body see what's there, or leastways telling in plain English what they've got. Dear me, but that looks nice;" she continued with a smile of satisfaction as a large slice of beef with all the accompaniments was set before her. "It takes you to order these fellows; I'm much obleeged to ye sir; I'm sure, and she gave a grateful look at him and another at Grace, "I don't know what I'd a done if it wasn't for you two."

The "two" very naturally looked up; their eyes, full of covert mirthfulness, met, but again Grace dropped her's in blushing confusion, vexed at herself as she did so for being so foolish. The loquacity of the good dame, however, quickly restored her self-possession.

"You see *I'm* one that's never backward in doing a good turn to others when it comes in my way, and I never forget a kindness done to myself. You don't belong to this neighborhood, I'm thinking, young gentleman. To Virginny? and come all the way up here pleasuring? Well, well, young folks will be young folks to the end of time. Maybe you would'nt mind telling me your name?"

"Not in the least," was the smiling reply, "Powhatan Clifton is my name—at your service."

A glance of eager interest was directed to the gentleman by most of those in his vicinity; it was evident

that the name was familiar to their ears. The querist alone looked dubious.

"*What* comes before Clifton?" she asked in a perplexity.

"Powhatan," he repeated, good-humoredly setting her right in her blundering attempts to pronounce what she finally declared was "the *queerest* name."

"'Tis an outlandish one, I admit, but you must not blame me," he returned with a gay laugh; "for you know that the parties most concerned generally *lack words* to express their indignation when thoughtless or ambitious relatives are bestowing on them some barbarous appellation."

The good lady was still repeating the name, which she found so difficult. "Dear me, but it's hard to call it," she said at last only half satisfied. "And so that's your Christian name; where on earth did your folks ever pick it up?"

"Not from any Christian source, I am afraid, madam," was the laughing reply.

"Well, indeed, I s'pose not, for I've heard of most Scripter names, and never heard that one before. It's odd some folks don't mind a bit what sort of names they give their children, and others again take a monstrous sight of pains to hunt up proper names. There's a woman up our way has two boys, and she calls them Shadrock and Abednego. She laid out to call the next

one Nebuchadnezzar, but, behold to her great disappointment it turned out to be a girl."

"How unfortunate!" said Mr. Clifton gravely. "Pray what name did she bestow on the unwelcome little girl?"

"Well she searched the Scriptor through and through, (I used to tell her that she minded her duty well that time anyhow,) but if you ever noticed it the women's names in the bible are mostly short 'less it may be some common one like 'Lizabeth; so the best she could do was to put two that she liked best together, and she called the child Miriam Esther."

"Miriam Esther!" repeated the gentleman, with slow deliberation. "Quite as fine a name as Nebuchadnezzar in its way, I think."

A general laugh went round the table, for the greater number of the guests were paying more attention to the talkers than to their dinner. Several joined in the conversation, recalling some peculiar or euphonious names which they had heard, but the good dame, though giving them a look now and then, as if to keep them in countenance, continued to direct her discourse chiefly to the "two" who had "obleeged her."

She told them how vexed she had often felt on account of her own name, which was Priscilla; and upon Grace saying that she considered it a very pretty name, admitted that it was well enough in itself; but what

troubled her about it when she was a grown up girl was that the boys and girls always twisted it into Silly; and what made it worse yet her father's name was Bean, so the tormentin' creturs would call her Silly Bean, and at a quilting, or an apple-bee, or any kind of a frolic, nothing pleased them more than to call out, "O never mind her—she's nobody—she's nothing but a Silly Bean." They used to think that smart, but for her part she never could see any smartness in it, and she told them often enough that if anybody was silly twas themselves; then they got mad and called her Silly oftener than before, till she wished the story-book her mother got that silly name out of, had been fur enough. She didn't mind it so much after she got married, her name was Johnson then, and the silly wouldn't sound so ridiculous with that tacked on to it; not that she allowed her husband to call her the ojus name, as he was a mind to at first, for short, but she set herself against that from the first going off, and to his dying day he never called her only Priscilla. Poor, dear man he was dead and gone now going on six years. And her darter, he wanted to call her Priscilla, or worse still Jerusha, but she insisted that the child should have a proper Chrissen name, and she was called Sarah. So Sarah she was married and living but a two days journey from home. And Robert—that was her oldest son—his wife was a city lady, and of course the the country wasn't good enough for her, (not that Rob-

ert ever liked it himself, to tell the whole truth). And so when he got married — that was as much as a dozen year ago, maybe more — he got his father to give him his share and he put it right into a grocery store in the next town and there he was living ever since. Josh — that was her second son ; he was called Joshuway for his father, he was most a man, and tended to everything about the farm jist as well as ever his father did. He took to farming jist from the cradle as you might say; not a bit like his brother who was always toolazy, as he often had to tell him, to hold the plow, or even to drop the grain into the furrows; and his father encouraged him in it, and kept him going to school till he was most a grown man. Josh never got great chance of schooling, no more nor reading and writing, and enough of ciphering to keep him from getting cheated in counting money; that was enough for any farmer's boys, for when they get more into their heads they were good for nothing about the farm, nothing would do for them but to run off to some great town to seek their fortune, and a poor enough one they got, most times. Her Josh hated town above all things; never was willing even to go to his brother's, which he had to do sometimes with the produce Robert was always glad to get to sell.

Thus Mrs. Johnson talked on until dinner was over, when to her extreme vexation the gentleman with the queer name, as she designated Mr. Clifton, "was

marched off" by some of the other gentlemen, who were delighted at this opportunity of making his acquaintance.

"He'd as lief rather stay with us, I know," said she with a significant wink to Grace. "Isn't he real handsome? And he's got that sort of way with him that's worth more than all the good looks in the world. Seemed to me at first he was proud and grand-like, but I don't see that he is — any more, I mean, than he ought to be. Some folks are always bragging that they aint a bit proud, but I think they're no account if they havn't *some* pride. Law me! isn't it a *roasting* day, I can't tell when I felt the heat so much. The ladies are mostly gone to lay down, I guess, if you want to take a nap don't let me hinder you."

Grace assured her that she had no intention of the kind. She saw that Mrs. Johnson was anxious to talk, and with her usual good nature she felt prompted to gratify her by listening to the details which to her companion seemed full of interest. There are few, perhaps, even among the wisest, who are not led insensibly into frivolous and egotistic disquisitions by the subtle flattery of an apparently interested listener; so Grace had only herself to blame for the incessant stream of talk that was poured into her ears during the next two hours. She heard all about the farm and dairy, and "Joshuway's" industry and shrewdness, and a thousand and

one similar matters; and especially the way it happened that Mrs. Johnson "getting jest tired out with seeing the same set of people year in and year out," had made up her mind to take a week's holiday; and how she had endeavored in every way to bring her Josh to a similar purpose, as the wheat was all in, and nothing to be done just then that the men could not do without him as well as with him, and how when Josh continued obstinate she got the more determined to have her own way. She thought the springs was the best place for her, for she was there once before, and knew all about it, but law! things was changed since that time. It was just the place for plain folks then, and she enjoyed herself very much, and so did Robert and his wife; if she knew how it had all been fixed up so grand and stylish she would never have thought of coming by herself; "but, however, here she was now," And then she had to tell about her journey, which was partly by wagon and partly by stage-coach, and how she was pretty near starved on the way, as she had started off in a hurry without the basket of provisions she had allready to bring, and so had to depend on what she could get on the road which was nothing to boast of though the charges were enormous.

We are afraid that Grace was a little hypocritical in the attention she seemed to give to this lengthy harangue. It is altogether likely that during the most of the time, her "faculties" were wrapt in a dreamy

reverie entirely oblivious of the good dame's presence. But an occasional ejaculation of surprise or assent was all that the latter required, and when finally with a promise to relate more on the morrow, she sought her own apartment, it was with an impression that her new acquaintance was a "nice, sensible girl," very unlike most girls of her age "one meets with now-a-days—foolish, giggling creatures."

CHAPTER VIII.

Love's Hopes and Fears.

"Love took up the harp of life, and turned it in his glowing hands,
Every moment lightly shaken, ran itself in golden sands."

Three weeks had flown swiftly by since the arrival of Powhatan Clifton at the Springs ; swiftly as time ever does when it "only treads on flowers;" yet it seemed to Grace Morton that in that brief period she had lived more than in all her previous life—the past was like a half-forgotten dream—the present alone was a blissful reality. Her thoughts and feelings, hitherto restrained and pent up within her own bosom, flowed unrestrainedly in presence of one who possessed in a rare degree the power of calling forth the best faculties of others, and she felt with a thrill of delight the consciousness of powers that she had never dreamed were hers. His was a master mind which had delighted to wander amid the boundless fields of ancient and modern lore, and on all subjects he conversed with ease and elegance, his vivid imagination investing the dullest theme with interest. On all subjects ? Nay, there was *one* on which his eloquent lips were silent. Even while enjoying the glorious mountain scenery with that exquisite delight, almost approaching to pain, which the possessor of genius feels amid such scenes, his kindling eye never looked "from nature up to nature's God;"—

the beauties of nature, the glories of art, the triumphs of science—of all these he would speak with the glowing enthusiasm of a richly-gifted mind, but he never touched on the noblest science of all, that comprehends within itself all that is grand and beautiful and sublime. But the omission was scarcely noticed by one who was fast learning to adopt his sentiments and views as her own, and who looked up to him with worshipping admiration as the best and noblest of his sex.

Once, indeed, when listening to a conversation he was carrying on with her uncle, Grace was startled by hearing Powhatan give utterance to what she deemed an infidel sentiment. He observed her look of pained surprise, and in a pleasant way regretted to find that there was one subject on which Miss Morton and he differed.

"Surely you are, you must be a Christian?" she said hurriedly. "You cannot be an atheist!"

"I must answer both your questions in the negative. I believe in a Creator—that is the extent of my religious belief. As to the wondrous Being whom people call God, taking any interest in the petty affairs of this lower world, I confess the idea seems to me quite absurd,—as absurd as my opinion doubtless seems to my fair opponent," he added, in a lighter tone.

Grace colored a little as she saw he was waiting for her reply. "I do not see how any one can suppose that God is indifferent to the welfare of the creatures

He has formed," she said, resting her flushed cheek on her hand, and looking down thoughtfully. "I remember once saving the life of a little chicken," she continued with a smile, "and from that day I have cared more for it than for all the other inhabitants of the poultry yard, as my uncle's housekeeper could tell you. As I was the means of preserving its life, it seems to have a particular claim on my care."

Powhatan smiled. "A true woman's argument, springing from the kind heart and warm fancy, without taking counsel of their terribly matter-of-fact antagonist—reason. But I wonder that Miss Morton does not think it presumptuous to imagine that this great God shares the attributes of our frail humanity."

"A poser, Grace," said her uncle triumphantly.

"By no means, dear uncle," replied his ward. "If Mr. Clifton will put the idea in another form, I think it will not appear to him either presumptuous or absurd. Suppose we say that the generosity, kindness, charity, and other good qualities of the creature, are derived from the Creator, who possesses all those attributes in an infinite degree."

"A fair argument, that, and, save the *infinite* clause, quite comprehensible," said Mr. Clifton.

"And besides," continued Grace, pleased with his ready assent, "you know we are told that one Person of the Godhead is like to us, His brethren, in all but sin."

"That will do, Grace," said Mr. Althorpe. "Pray don't mystify us with allusions to that most nonsensical of all dogmas. How any sane man or woman can profess to believe in three persons in one God, and one of them also a man, passes my comprehension."

Grace colored, and was silent.

"And yet there is something very beautiful in this religion," began Powhatan, musingly.

"In which form of it?" interrupted Mr. Althorpe, testily. "For this wonderful faith is split into more forms of worship and belief—each one of which, according to its followers, is altogether right, and the others altogether wrong—than one would like to begin counting."

"I referred only to the fundamental doctrine of Christianity," was the young man's answer, "to the belief in a triune God, and of one person having assumed our nature. Ah, that is a very flattering doctrine! One would like to believe that human nature had been raised to this sublime dignity, but alas and alack! how can one believe in such 'brotherhood' when he sees how weak and miserable a creature is man, full of faults and follies, and wicked proclivities."

"Do not jest, Mr. Clifton—the subject is too sacred," entreated Grace.

"Jest! Pardon me. I was never more serious. Though not believing the dogma, I repeat that it seems

to me a beautiful and touching one; and I do not wonder, Miss Grace, that your sex, with its quick appreciation of whatever is romantic and poetical, readily adopts it."

Mr. Althorpe, who had been impatiently waiting to resume their former conversation, here interrupted. The subject was not again mentioned, and though it caused Grace a momentary uneasiness, she soon forgot it in the absorbing happiness of her dream. With a fervor all the more intense, because modesty forbade its outward manifestation, she gloried in the homage which his brilliant powers won the young Virginian. Even her uncle, who was so chary of bestowing praise, had taken occasion several times to express a high opinion of his talents and abilities, and was evidently pleased with the growing intimacy between him and Grace. And so, as we have said, three weeks had passed, each day drawing those young hearts more closely together, when Grace was suddenly aroused from her dream of bliss.

One of the ladies made "a most interesting discovery" which she hastened to communicate to the others. "She had come suddenly upon Mr. Clifton, while he was gazing very intently at a miniature, and though on perceiving it, he instantly put it into his pocket, and obstinately refused to show it to her, yet she had seen in the one glance she had luckily obtained, that

it represented a young and very lovely girl." An important discovery, truly! Mr. Clifton, they had already ascertained, had no sister; the inference was plain that the miniature represented his lady-love, and was unanimously agreed to when the lady went on to describe a certain consciousness in his manner while she was teasing him to give her "just one little peep at the pretty locket."

Grace, with her head bent low over the flowers she was arranging, listened anxiously to this revelation, and withdrew as soon as she could from the gay group to muse in solitude over her vanished dream. That moment had revealed to her the secret of her heart; she had not cared to analyze the cause of her happiness; she had not thought that it was the brightness of her own spirit, touched by the enchanter's wand! that had made all things so beautiful to her during those happy days—days whose memory she must now banish forever, O! the agony of that humiliating knowledge, that she had given her heart to one who valued not the gift; whose affections belonged to another. She could not but acknowledge to herself that he had never spoken a word of love, but then what meant those impassioned glances, those thrilling tones that had often made her heart bound with rapture? And the preference he had so openly shown for her society; the confidence with which he had unfolded to her his ambitious

dreams, sure, as it seemed, of her ready sympathy in his brilliant hopes and lofty aspirations,—must all this be forgotten, or remembered only as an idle dream? How she longed once more to be in the solitude of Oakdale! But Mr. Althorpe had fixed on the day of their departure from the springs, it was more than a week distant; meantime she must wander amid scenes that had lost their very charm, forcing smiles to hide the heaviness of her heart, and, harder than all the rest, must meet *him* with a demeanor that would prevent any suspicion of her humiliating secret. She must be just a little reserved, but yet pleasant and affable; not seeming to avoid his society, and yet taking care to be with him as seldom as possible, lest he or any one else should suspect the existence of feelings of which she was now painfully conscious.

But Grace soon felt the difference between making such resolutions and putting them into practice. She overacted her part, of course, and Powhatan was surprised and hurt by the sudden alteration of her manner. His efforts to overcome her reserve and bring back the happy “understanding” of the past weeks, were worse than wasted; for poor Grace felt the necessity of encasing herself “in a triple armor of indifference,” to resist the influence of those tender looks and tones; and, at length he also assumed an air of coldness, and, mentally accusing her of coquetry and fickleness, ceased

to offer attentions which were no longer welcome. Grace saw that her uncle noticed with displeasure the changed state of affairs, but he made no reference to it, perhaps not knowing which of the parties was most in fault. But there was another looker-on who was equally penetrating and less discreet. This was Mrs. Johnson, who was enjoying herself immensely, as was proved by her prolonged stay at the Springs, notwithstanding “Joshuway” had sent two letters to hurry her home. She “guessed they could get along without her jest now, so she wouldn’t hurry herself,—like as not Josh thought she was laying out a sight of money, but after all the money was her own, and ’twasnt every year she took a holiday.”

“Seems to me you’re not nigh so *chipper-like* as you was,” she said to Grace. “I never like to see young girls lose their sperits and take to moping. And there’s Mr.—*you* know who I mean. I declare the first part of his name is so queer that it jest puts the whole of it out of my head. I made him laugh about it yesterday, though he’s getting jest about as poky as you. I was trying to pronounce his name, if he’s told me how once he has a hundred times, I do believe, but ’tis no use. I can’t get my tongue around it—so I told him at last ’twasn’t a fit name for him *any-how*. I’d jest as lief call him pow-wow at once. Ah, you’re smiling at that, I see. Wasn’t it real sassy in me?—most any one else would be hopping mad; but he laughed as if

twas the best thing he'd heard for a month; for all he hasn't seemed to feel like laughing these couple of days. I'd like to know what you've been doing to him, Miss Grace?"

"I, dear Mrs. Johnson!" said Grace, affecting surprise.

"Yes, *you*, dear Miss Morton," mimicking her tone. "You needn't tell me that you two havn't quarreled."

"We have not, indeed," interrupted Grace; "there is no occasion for our quarreling."

"That's true enough, but silly youngsters manage to quarrel now and then whether there's occasion or no. Something's happened between him and you, I know, and I'm real sorry."

Grace was silent, her whole attention apparently given to the tasteful cap-trimming she was arranging for her companion. Presently the latter made another attack.

"I do wish you'd make it up—"

"If you give me the lace I'll try what I can do," said Grace demurely.

"I'm not talking of the cap, and you know it, you provoking creature," said the old lady with a burst of hearty laughter. "I wish you two foolish things would make up your quarrel. That would be more to me than all the fine caps you could fix up in a week. It's jes' as much to see how things would turn out

with you and him as anything else, that made me stay here so long in spite of Josh. I *do* want to see you both happy more'n I can say."

Grace laughed a little, but there was a grateful tone in her voice as she replied: "You are very kind, dear Mrs. Johnson, I am very grateful to you."

"You needn't be, not a bit," interrupted the old lady. "When I take a liking to any one, it *is* a liking, and somehow I fancied you and him from the very first minute."

There was a sincerity not to be doubted in her manner, and the lonely young heart opened to the proffered sympathy of the motherly woman, as naturally as the thirsty flower opens to the soft dew. Often afterwards she wondered how she could have unfolded to one almost a stranger, feelings which she scarcely dared to acknowledge even to herself; but the blunt, honest-minded, open-hearted countrywoman, was one to invite the confidence of the most reticent, without awakening the slightest fear of its being betrayed. Grace felt her spirit brightened by sharing its burden of hopes and fears with one whose sympathy was as warm and earnest as she could have craved. Mrs. Johnson had her own doubts as to the correctness of the statement regarding the miniature, but she sensibly refrained from giving them expression. She secretly determined ere the day was many hours older to open

the subject cautiously to Mr. Clifton himself; which determination, however, was not carried into effect, for that gentleman had left the hotel with a hunting party immediately after breakfast. The good dame was vexed. Only the other day when the expedition was first spoken of, he had refused to join it; and now he was gone off just when she was very certain that a few words would set all right. Grace heard of his departure with a silent pang. The hunting party intended to be absent for a week; before their return she would be once more at home; she could not, therefore, hope to see him again. 'Tis true that was what she had been longing for, *but*—

The hunters returned unexpectedly the next evening. They had discovered a scene of peculiar beauty which had not yet been explored in any of their rambles, and with self-denying gallantry for which they claimed no little merit, had returned to conduct their fair friends thither. A council was immediately held, and it was decided to get up an extempore picnic for the very next day, lest there might be an unfavorable change in the weather. The gentlemanly proprietor, always attentive to the wishes of his temporary guests, promised to have an ample supply of creature comforts provided, and horses, and carriages, and wagons, in readiness as early as desired. As it would be the last excursion before the breaking up of the large company

that had spent the last month so pleasantly together, all were going save a few fogies like Mr. Althorpe, who thought the labor of "climbing the highest peak" was poorly repaid by the most magnificent landscape. There was the usual rallying on their laziness and want of adventurous spirit, given and received in perfect good-humor; every tongue was in motion; all were full of eager excitement and pleasurable anticipation. Grace's buoyant spirit threw off its burden of unrest, and she quite forgot her *role* when the young Virginian sought her side, with a manner as free and cordial as if no cloud had ever come between them. One glance into those frank eyes banished her distrust; the miniature was forgotten, and Grace, to Mrs. Johnson's delight, was her former self once more.

The next day dawned as fair and promising as if it had been bespoken for the occasion. At an early hour the excursionists were on their way. The soft purple haze of a September morning lifted gradually as they went onward, revealing glimpses of lofty hills, grand old woods, and elm-fringed waters. Anon the sun burst forth in regal splendor, shedding its first gold on the spear-like pine-tops and bushy hemlock branches, crowning the mountain heights, and brightening up, as with a shower of gems, the dew laden bushes by the wayside; while the fresh wind shook down drops of silver and gold from every bough.

Gaining the top of a central peak, they saw the billowy mountain ranges rolling east and west, and stretching southward in towering majesty; the sun lighting up the foreground, while opposite a veil of purplish blackness spread over the plain and far up the mountain slopes. But soon the curtain of clouds was rent apart, the neighboring valleys and distant mountains became visible, and the whole panorama glowed with all the gorgeousness of green and gold; a ravishing spectacle presenting that singular blending of soft, almost Arcadian, loveliness with the wildest grandeur, that renders the mountain region of the Keystone State so charmingly picturesque.

The day passed all too quickly with the merry party from the Springs; there was so much to engage the attention of the various groups, all intent on making the most of the fast-flying hours. There was hunting, and fishing, and botanizing, and, perchance, sly love-making, for which there were the finest opportunities. There was so many leaping cascades which must be traced to the fountain-head; so many charming nooks and gloomy defiles which must, by all means, be explored. And not the least valued of the day's enjoyments to most pic-nic makers, there was the noon-day repast to be partaken of beside a little mountain lake, fringed with the rich purple mist and gorgeous golden rod, and perfumed with the sweet breath of the pond

lily. And there were walks through the fine old woods where the pine cones made a soft elastic carpet beneath their tread; and knolls and mounds cushioned with variegated mosses, beautiful as the richest embroidery, invited them to rest; while the sunlight filtered through the interlacing boughs, flecking the different groups with spots of quivering gold; and the deep stillness of the forest was pleasantly broken by bursts of merry laughter and gushes of sweet melody.

The afternoon was far spent and still they lingered, willing to prolong their pleasure till the latest possible moment, when the muttering of distant thunder brought the whole party to their feet. In wild haste they hurried from the woods, and, on reaching the outskirts, cast anxious glances to the sky, bright with piled-up banks of glowing clouds. "O, we can easily reach the carriages before the storm comes on," cried some carelessly. "Just look at that golden pinnacle shooting up so fast—how grand!" But the more experienced would allow no time for raptures, for they knew the golden pinnacle was a thunder cloud, and another was coming to meet it, and the mountain behind them was in an instant lost to view.

"O, dear!" cried Mrs. Johnson in dismay, "they will meet soon, and we'll be in the very midst of them. The thunder will be enough to frighten a body out of their senses—can't we run faster?" And in desperate haste she began the steep descent, stumbling over the

rolling stones, catching at every shrub, and obstinately refusing the proffered help of Mr. Clifton, as she "could get on a sight faster by herself."

"A storm among the mountains! I wouldn't miss it on any account!" exclaimed a romantic young lady, longing to lag behind, but her cruel "papa" who had no wish to test the merits of hydropathy, hurried her on, muttering his fears of being "laid up with rheumatism for a month, for this day's frolic."

But fast as nimble feet might run, the clouds flew faster. The squall came, twisting twigs from the trees, sending showers of leaves flying like hail, rudely snapping at bonnet strings, and carrying away the head-gear that had not been tied tightly down to resist its onset. The flying groups brought to a sudden stand, huddled together like a flock of frightened sheep, most of the gentlemen gallantly interposing themselves as a barrier between themselves and their fair companions, who held tightly to the trees, or made wild clutches at their next neighbor; a few crouching on the ground, and among them Mrs. Johnson, whose frantic exclamation that "the next thing she'd be sent spinning jest like one of them leaves," was irresistibly ludicrous, considering her substantial proportions.

The gust passed, and all looked out into the darkness around and beneath, in vain quest of some place of shelter. They could not stay beneath the trees, for already there was a blinding flash, and simultaneously

a peal of thunder rattled down the sky, its roaring reverberations sending a chill through the stoutest heart. Fighting against the wind, and the rain that was now coming down with the rush of a torrent, they gained a ledge of rocks, behind which they had partial shelter from the wind, though not from the rain. Thankful were they for the refuge, such as it was; and fretful complaints and impatient grumbling were awed into silence by the awful sublimity of the scene. The lightning blazed incessantly above, beneath, on every side; the thunder rolled as continuously, peal following quickly upon peal, till the very mountains seemed crumbling beneath their feet. Poetic minds realized the force of Byron's vivid description:

"Far along,

From peak to peak, the rattling crags among,
Leaps the live thunder! Not from one lone cloud,
But every mountain now hath found a tongue,
And Jura answers through her misty shroud,
Back to the joyous Alps, who call to her aloud."

The storm past, descending to the valley, and the shivering, dripping excursionists came forth from their dubious shelter.

"By George!" cried the rheumatic gentleman with a heroic effort to be facetious, "if any man after this speaks of a douche-bath in my presence, I shall take it as a personal insult."

The romantic young lady bewailed the loss of her

flat; and looked as if she had had enough of "a storm among the mountains;" others who had thoughtlessly worn dainty gaiters and slippers, looked dolefully down at the dilapidated "remains;" beautiful dresses, charming sacks, and becoming hats, were in a woful condition, and their wearers in a corresponding state of mind, which was not improved by the merciless railery of their masculine relations.

Mrs. Johnson gave it as her opinion that "they all looked like so many half-drowned rats;" congratulated herself with a long-drawn sigh on having lived through it all; and chided Grace as being "the queerest girl," never having seemed to give a thought to the discomfort and danger of their situation.

Grace only laughed and blushed in reply. Discomfort!—how could she regret that amid the tender and assiduous care of which she had been the object?—danger!—how little thought could she give to that after hearing the few softly whispered words that not all the sounds of the rushing tempest could drown—words still echoing in her inmost heart, and to be treasured there forever.

The descent of the mountain was resumed, but what a toil it was! Wide circuits had to be made to avoid fallen trees; the mossy stones were so slippery as to scarcely afford a footing; brawling rivulets and deep gullies crossed the path at every turn. But drenchings, and dangers, and weariness, were alike forgotten in

the magical splendor with which the setting sun illumined the scene. The west was all ablaze with golden glory; all around them glowed in the vivid light; every twig and blade of grass was tipped with jewels; countless rills and cascades flashed and sparkled in the slanting sunbeams which, shooting across the valley when the rain was still falling, turned the shower into dazzling diamond spray. It was a fitting termination of a day into which had been crowded so much of pleasure and excitement, and two hearts at least hailed it as emblematic of their own future.

CHAPTER IX.

The Soul's Awakening.

"How the rapt soul, by high emotions won,
To yon bright realm aspires!"

Powhatan Clifton accompanied the travelers home, and spent some days at Oakdale, during which time he made Mr. Althorpe acquainted with his attachment to Grace, and fully satisfied all the inquiries which that gentleman, as self-appointed guardian to the orphan girl, felt called upon to make. There was no formal engagement, for Mr. Althorpe's old-fashioned ideas were opposed to such haste; but it was understood that the parties should correspond as frequently as they desired, and the pain of parting was lessened by the anticipation of meeting early in the ensuing year. For once "the course of true love" promised to run smooth enough. Grace smiled to herself at the recollection of the trifling incident which had once interrupted its tranquil flow. Mrs. Johnson, true to her determination, had managed to question Powhatan on the subject of the miniature, and learned that it belonged to another gentleman, from whose pocket the gay Virginian had abstracted it to cause him a fright, little imagining how his practical joke would turn against himself. The good lady took much credit to herself for having discovered the exact truth of the matter; and

at parting, gave Grace half a dozen solemn warnings against ever troubling herself about it again, mingled with as many urgent invitations to visit her as soon as opportunity offered, as "she would be real glad to see her at any time." Grace promised to see about it, and parted with her new acquaintance with no little regret.

Mr. Althorpe soon relapsed into his old habits of seclusion, leaving his niece to amuse and occupy herself as best she might. She did not find the stillness and monotony of Oakdale as unwelcome as she had feared after the gayeties to which she had been lately accustomed. There was so much to tell to "Mother Wilson;" so many pleasant reminiscences of her sojourn at the Springs to recall; and ah! so much to furnish themes for delicious day-dreams!

One bright Sunday afternoon in October, Grace walked over to the village, intending to go to afternoon service at her accustomed place of worship. As she approached the Catholic church she found a large number of persons assembled, in evident expectation of something to be seen, and a natural curiosity induced her to pause. She had waited but a few moments when a number of children emerged from a building close by, and moved two by two towards the chapel. Grace looked admiringly on the little girls who headed the procession, in pure white dresses and veils, and inquiringly asking of a bystander the cause, was told

that the bishop was there from Philadelphia to administer Confirmation. A sudden impulse led her to join the crowd that was following the little procession into the sacred edifice. A lady in one of the upper pews politely offered her a seat, and relinquishing her first intention of merely looking around and then slipping quietly out, she prepared to give her undivided attention to a service which, if not interesting or impressive, would at least have the charm of novelty, since this was her first visit to a Catholic church. Very plain and unpretending was the little country chapel; widely different from the gorgeous temples of which she had read; where the noblest efforts of genius had been unsparingly devoted to the embellishment of the house of the Most High; yet to Grace the neat altar with its simple decorations was an object of interest which she had not wearied of observing, when her attention was claimed by the impressive ceremony she had come to witness.

With eager interest she bent her gaze on the illustrious prelate who, after kneeling on the altar step while the choir chanted the "*Veni Creator Spiritus*," turned to address the candidates on the holy sacrament of Confirmation. She had heard of him often.—O, to whom in all America is the name of KENRICK unfamiliar! name held in veneration by the great and good of every Christian land,—worthy to be transmitted to all

future ages, on the very page that glows with the names of the Chrysostoms, and the Jeromes—the Gregory's, and the Bernards, who have adorned the annals of the Church with the brightest examples of profound learning and heroic virtue—of zeal the most ardent, united by charity the most meek and self-sacrificing!

"There is a large and fertile space in every life, in which might be planted the oak and fruit trees of enlightened principle and virtuous habits, which, growing up, would yield to old age an enjoyment, a glory, and a shade!"

Like an affectionate father giving earnest counsel to his children, the saintly Bishop addressed those who were about to be confirmed, recalling to their minds the instructions they had previously received as to the meaning of each ceremony used in administering the sacrament. Grace listened with eager interest, found that some, at least, of the ceremonies of the Catholic Church were far from being "frivolous and unmeaning," as she had often heard them stigmatized. Nor was the use of "an unknown language" a bar to her perfect understanding of the impressive scene that followed; for, on receiving from the lady who sat beside her, a prayer-book containing the entire ceremonial in Latin and English, she was enabled to follow it intelligently, and with a full appreciation of its beauty and appropriateness, from the opening words:—"May the

Holy Ghost come down upon you, and the power of the Most High keep you from all sin,"—to the solemn blessing given by the Bishop at the conclusion, to all present:—"Behold, thus shall every man be blessed who feareth the Lord. May the Lord bless you out of Sion, that you may see the good things of Jerusalem all your life, and that you may live with him for all eternity."

Grace was sorry when it was all over. She noticed, however, that although some persons who like herself had been drawn thither by idle curiosity, were leaving the church, the congregation remained. Presently the large candles on the altar were lighted, the sound of the organ was heard, and the little surpliced acolytes again entered the sanctuary, followed by the pastor in his snowy surplice and gold-embroidered stole, and the Bishop, wearing over his richly-wrought surplice, the purple cape and glittering chain and cross, denoting his pontifical rank. Again, through the polite attention of her neighbor, Grace was able to understand the Vesper service, and found with no little surprise, that it was altogether taken from the Bible! The psalms which were chanted in succession, were the very ones which had always seemed to her the most beautiful of all the compositions of the Royal Prophet,—the 109th, 110th, 111th, 112th, 116th; (in her Bible, she remembered they were numbered as the 110th, 111th, 112th,

113th, and 117th;) and they were followed by the "Magnificat," that sublime song from the first chapter of St. Luke, in which the humble Virgin of Nazareth, while "magnifying the Lord for the great things he had done to her," foretold that "all generations should call her blessed,"—a prophecy literally fulfilled in the Church founded by her Divine Son, which, through all generations, has gloried in proclaiming the praise of "the Blessed Virgin," in defiance of opposition and ridicule.

After the Magnificat, the Bishop delivered a discourse, which, though particularly adapted to those who had just been confirmed, was instructive to all the congregation, as reminding them of the time they had had been admitted to the sacrament of Confirmation, the gifts they had then received, and the obligations they had incurred. In language intelligible to the weakest capacity, yet eloquent from his deep feeling and earnestness, the holy prelate portrayed the change which had been wrought in the Apostles by the descent of the Holy Ghost; how, from weak and wavering disciples of Christ, subject to many failings, and unable to comprehend the sublime teachings which were wholly at variance with the maxims of that world which they still held in esteem, they became, in a moment, strong, steadfast and courageous soldiers of Christ; glorying only in being known as the followers of Him whom so short a time before they had shame-

fully deserted—despising the world, its glories, its pleasures, its emoluments—seeking eagerly after the humiliations and sufferings from which they had once shrank in timid dread. He cited the example of numerous martyrs of both sexes, of every age and condition, who in each succeeding century have shown forth the same wonderful effects of confirmation; and impressed on the minds of his hearers the obligation they were under of studying and imitating those glorious models. That they also having been “signed with the sign of the Cross, and confirmed with the chrism of salvation, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,” were enlisted under the banner of the Cross, and bound to the last moment of their lives to fight the battles of Christ against the three enemies they had solemnly renounced in Baptism—against the world, by resisting its insidious influence and resolutely opposing its dangerous customs; against the flesh, by combatting its evil passions, and perverse inclinations; against the devil, by resisting his temptations. With a persuasive earnestness that roused every latent feeling of pious enthusiasm, he urged upon them to remember constantly that, in the words of a fine old hymn—

“Not by the martyr’s death alone

The martyr’s crown in heaven is won:”

that to live according to the precepts of the Gospel in the midst of a corrupt world—to persevere in virtue

despite all the temptations continually arising from within and without—to cling to the standard of Christ with that generous pride which St. Paul felt when he gloried only in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world was crucified to him and he to the world—to hold steadfastly to the Faith “once delivered to the Saints,” even when its profession involved loss, opprobrium or ridicule—such a life was in itself a species of protracted martyrdom, a sacrifice of self, as glorious as that of the martyr at the stake, and as certain of being recompensed by the crown which awaits the conqueror “on bloodless fields of victory.”

Grace felt her heart throb and her eyes moisten as she listened. Emotions never felt before—a vague longing after something better, nobler, than she had heretofore known, possessed her spirit; she gazed with a feeling of envy mingled with awe on those who had now, “through the imposition of hands, received the Holy Ghost,—the Comforter,” whose presence still, as in the earliest days of the Church, consoles its children in the midst of trouble and danger, and nerves them to deeds of heroic virtue.

The reverence and devotion evinced by the congregation during the “Benediction of the Holy Sacrament,” impressed her still more deeply, and she returned home in a mood of unusual thoughtfulness.

That evening, when chatting with the housekeeper,

some of these newly-awakened thoughts found utterance, to Mrs. Wilson's annoyance: and in a grumbling tone very rare with her when addressing Grace, she wondered "why some people, young girls especially, were forever acting as if they had no sense, — what on earth took *her* to the Catholic Church, as if her own wasn't good enough for her!"

Grace laughingly replied that it was unkind to grudge her the gratification she had derived from her visit to St. Peter's, adding more seriously that she almost wished she had been brought up a Catholic,—it seemed to her if she were one she would be better and happier. A speech which made Mrs. Wilson draw herself up to the erect attitude she always assumed when highly displeased, and commence a long and emphatic lecture on such folly, ending with a "warning to her companion, to be guided by the advice of one old enough to be her grandmother, and keep away from that church in future; if she didn't she would be sorry for it some day that *she* could vouch for."

Grace only smiled at the warning. She thought it altogether unlikely that she would take the advice, well meant though it might be, but not deeming it necessary to say so, she referred again to the Bishop's sermon, repeating some portions of it which had struck her most forcibly. Mrs. Wilson was certainly an un-

gracious listener, but the young girl, intent on her theme, took no notice of her contemptuous "tushes" and "pshaws," but continued half-unconsciously to dwell on some of the prelate's remarks and suggestions to the newly enlisted soldiers of Christ.

"He made me feel quite anxious to participate in all the graces and blessings which he said Confirmation confers," concluded Grace with a sigh; "but then the obligations one incurs! I shuddered when he told them always to remember that the cross now imprinted on their foreheads would remain there forever, invisible, indeed, to their fellow creatures, but visible to God and his angels; that it could never be effaced, but would remain through all eternity, to add to their glory in heaven, if they lived and died faithful to their divine Leader—to increase their shame and punishment in hell, if unfortunately they died enemies of God. Oh! is not that a terrible thought, mother Dora?"

"Stuff and nonsense!" said the housekeeper with a sneer. "What does he know about it?—He's never been in the other world yet, I reckon," chuckling over what she fancied a "smart" idea.

How painfully the flippant remarks of the ignorant or unreflecting, jar upon the mind in its moments of enthusiasm. Hurt and vexed by her companion's levity, Grace mentally applied to her the scriptural adage

about "casting pearls before swine," and refrained from farther quotations.

"That's a pretty custom they have of dressing the children in white on such occasions," said the housekeeper after a long interval of silence. "I've seen them several times, and the little girls do look sweet in their white frocks and veils."

"They looked very pretty this afternoon," said Grace, "and that reminds me of one of the little boys who were confirmed; the most beautiful child I ever beheld, with short thick curls of golden hair, and blue eyes sparkling like diamonds. It seemed to me that I had seen him before, but I cannot imagine when nor where. I think you must know him, mother Wilson, as you used to live in the village; so handsome a child could not have failed to attract your notice."

She waited for a moment in expectation of a reply, but receiving none, added: "He is a brother of the young lady who was so polite to me in the church—"

"How do you know that?" interrupted Mrs. Wilson sharply.

"I heard him call her sister Sophy when he ran to meet her at the gate after service. What a sweet-looking girl she is! I should like very much to be acquainted with her."

"Humph! It would make little difference to you

when you are going off to Virginia so soon," answered the housekeeper dryly. And then, as if anxious to change the subject, she began to speak of Powhatan Clifton, who had won her favorable opinion during his brief visit to Oakdale.

CHAPTER X.

Disappointment and Sorrow.

"Yes, it is well; did storms ne'er rise,
 Our skies would be most bright and fair;
 'Twould be too hard to rend those ties,
 That now are half worn out by care;
 For every trial God has given,
 But draws us nearer unto heaven."

We must go back to a former period in our story, and see how our friends in the village have fared meantime.

We left them busily at work for Miss Walters, whose elegant trousseau furnished ample employment to Mrs. Althorpe and her two eldest daughters during the autumn. Jennie, also, delighted to assist as much as her school duties permitted, and Willie fancied himself extremely useful in notching skirt facings, and cutting out scalloped edgings. It was altogether the happiest time which the little family had enjoyed since the period of their bereavement; their brightening prospects, and the great improvement in Sophia's health, called for their unceasing gratitude to the Providence that watched "over the widow and the fatherless." At the suggestion of Miss Walters, Mrs. Althorpe had removed from their comfortless dwelling to a neat little cottage just off the principal street; the difference in the rent being but trifling, while their

new abode was not only more comfortable, but was much better located in a business point of view. And business, the kind hearted young lady was resolved they should have. She took every opportunity of displaying specimens of their taste and skill to her friends, making them promise to employ her proteges in future; and she procured the newest styles, that they might be prepared to execute all kinds of work in their line.

At Christmas the wedding took place, and the young bride went with her chosen one to make her home in a distant State. Her departure was greatly regretted by the Althorpes, especially by Sophia, who continually missed her pleasant companionship. But the efforts she had made to benefit them were not unsuccessful. They had plenty to do, and began to look forward to the time when they would be able to open a little store in connection with their trade. Sophia would go to Philadelphia to procure their stock of trimmings and stationery; she had been there once with Miss Walters, to assist that lady in making her selections, and had seen so many fancy articles, which Angela and herself could make up at odd times, once they would have the materials, and which could not fail of meeting a ready sale, since there was nothing of the kind in the village. And the sisters plied their needles all the more zealously while building their "castles in the air."

But these pleasant hopes were doomed to disappointment. A fashionable mantua-maker and milliner arrived in the village, and set the whole female population in a flutter of excitement and delight. Such patterns as she had—blue, white and pink, tricked out with the most elaborate “pinking” and “fluting”—such loves of bonnets and charming head-dresses—such gorgeous ribbons and sweet artificials—really there was no getting away from that beautiful show-room! And the presiding genius was equally charming in her way. She was a showy-looking person, dressed up to the extreme of the mode, and, having been “forewoman in a large establishment in the Empire City,” (as she was careful to impress upon her hearers), could discuss the affairs of its first families as fluently as she could talk of fashions and styles; there was not a name could be mentioned with which she was not familiar. She possessed an inexhaustible fund of gossip—perhaps it might more properly be termed scandal—with which she would regale her eager patrons by the hour; family “histories” which everybody knows, but nobody ever alludes to, you know; “rumors” and “reports” without number, all “on the most unquestionable authority.”

How could the widow and her daughters, so quiet and lady-like in manner, so ignorant of fashionable to-

pics, and conscientiously averse to mischievous gossip, compete with this dashing rival? They soon saw themselves deserted, save by a few who were frightened by the exorbitant charges of the new comer; while she was overwhelmed with work, as she was wont to boast, her assistants had to be up late and early—she only wished the days were just twice as long, then she might possibly get through without disappointing any of her customers. Mrs. Walters exulted, for it was through her that the fashionable *modiste* had been induced to come to the village; it gave her “the twofold triumph of increasing her own importance, and injuring those presuming seamstresses,” as she designated the Althorpes.

So their gleam of prosperity was as transient as it was bright. The air-castles fell into hopeless ruins, and again began the wearisome struggle to keep the wolf from the door. They had one friend who remained constant to them through all—the old housekeeper at Oakdale, who, partly from her liking for Mrs. Althorpe, but still more from her attachment to “poor Mrs. Williams’” children, was a frequent visitor, and took the warmest interest in their affairs. She had rejoiced in their brightening prospects, approved of all their plans, and her disappointment was scarcely less keen than their own, and her indignation much more loudly

expressed, at the event which had had so disastrous an influence on their fortune.

Her first impulse on hearing it, was to apply to Mr. Althorpe for her wages. Surprised at her request, he reminded her that she had desired him to keep the money for her, as he had formerly done, until it would amount to something worth while. Scarcely knowing what reply to make, as she had expected her demand would be complied with at once, she stammered something about that being more than a year ago, and by this time the amount was worth thinking about, as she had need of it.

"But you expressed a desire to save all your earnings for three or four years, Dora, and when I proposed putting the money out at interest you consented."

Mrs. Wilson's embarrassment increased. The fact was, that finding the Althorpes at that time in a fair way of getting along, she had at first thought of saving her money with a view of helping them to go into business, and when Mr. Althorpe proposed putting it out at interest, having a very indefinite idea of the growth of money, she had consented joyfully, anticipating that in a few years it would amount to a fund sufficient for sending Willie Althorpe to college; the darling object of her ambition. But now that times were changed with her friends, she wanted to see them provided with fuel, flour, and various little comforts before

the approaching winter. She dared not explain this to Mr. Althorpe; she could only reiterate her desire "for some money," a desire which he could not gratify, for, having lately had an opportunity of buying some property in the neighborhood at a great bargain, he had purchased some of it in her name, and it would require her wages for nearly three years to come, to pay for it.

"'Tis a capital investment, Dora," he continued, after having given her all the details he deemed necessary. "In five years from now, it will be worth three or four times what I paid for it, and will yield you a snug little income."

The prospective income was anything but satisfactory to the disappointed housekeeper, but Mr. Althorpe coolly assured her that the thing was done, and that he rejoiced that it was not in his power to give her money which he knew would be thoughtlessly spent, leaving her destitute, perhaps, in her old age. Of course, while he lived, he wished her to consider Oakdale as her home, but it was also his desire to make some provision for her in case of unforeseen contingency.

Mrs. Wilson expressed her sense of his kindness, but declared that she was not afraid of starving in any case. She could go out nursing, as she did before, or turn her hand to most anything, and she would rather

have one hundred dollars just then, than five hundred in years to come.

Mr. Althorpe smilingly replied that if at any time she found the money inconvenient, he had no doubt her grand-daughter would relieve her of it.

"And suppose it is for her I want it now, Mr. Althorpe?" persisted the housekeeper, as a new thought struck her.

The old gentleman, who had resumed his paper as a sign that the conference was ended, turned to her inquiringly:

"It's most time for her to be learning some trade, I think, sir," she continued rather confusedly, "and I would want to board her in the village, so that she would have every advantage."

"You are dreaming," he interrupted testily. "When did you take that wise notion about a child still going to school?"

"Why, she's going on fourteen, and is as well-grown and strong as many a girl a year or two older."

"And you want to rob her of that strength by confining her in some miserable work-room for twelve or sixteen hours out of the twenty-four! Make your mind easy about Hannah. If it is for her you want the money, you are just as well off without it. 'Tis no use, my good Dora," he added, as she stood her ground, considering what farther plea she could urge. "If you were really in need of any sum, large or small, I would

give it without a moment's hesitation, but I am convinced that this is not the case. I can form a pretty shrewd guess as to the parties whom you wish to benefit by your inconsiderate charity."

"'Tis no charity, sir," Mrs. Wilson spoke up quickly, knowing from his look that he had penetrated her secret. "And I cannot but feel that if you knew all, you would be so far from hindering me, that—"

"Stop!" interrupted the stern man, raising his finger warningly. "I do not wish a repetition of the scene of some years ago. Remember, that there is one subject which must never be spoken of in my hearing."

He turned away angrily as he spoke, and the housekeeper left the room, feeling bitterly the uselessness of attempting to move that stubborn will, and sorely grieved at her inability to help those for whom she felt so deeply interested.

The privations and hardships which she knew they were enduring, caused her many a gloomy hour during the ensuing year; but her anger knew no bounds when she at length found that Willie had obtained employment from the village lawyer as office-boy. It was not without a severe conflict with her feelings that the widowed mother had consented to the child leaving school and commencing at his tender age the hard struggle of life; but poverty—that unrelenting task-master—

sternly demanded the sacrifice of her maternal tenderness and pride. Willie was fired with a child's ardent ambition to do great things for his mother and sisters, and his delight, when he brought home the weekly earnings, which to him seemed so important, and the satisfaction he expressed with his "place," served to reconcile them in a degree to the hard necessity of the case.

Not so with Mrs. Wilson. In no measured terms she expatiated on the cruelty of sending the dear little fellow to earn a livelihood, when it would be so easy to secure for him his birth-right by giving him up to his grandfather. If his mother was determined to sacrifice her own and her daughter's comfort on account of that horrid religion which had already brought her trouble in plenty, 'twas bad enough; but to stand in that child's light, to see him growing up in a menial capacity, while the inheritance which by right was his, would be given to strangers, for *her* part she could not rest in her bed if she had such a crime on her conscience. Mrs. Althorpe took no offence at her language, well knowing the disinterested affection which caused the good woman's heat; but listened patiently to her oft-repeated entreaty to give the little boy an opportunity of winning the favor of the stern master of Oakdale. Mrs. Wilson felt confident that the old gentleman would be glad to have him there; she knew

that he had no care for the youth he had brought home with him, and after Miss Grace's marriage, he would be lovelier than ever. If Willie were only given up to him, with nothing said about religion, everything would come right in the end; and anyhow, what did a child of ten years know or care about religion? The main thing was to see that he was not defrauded of his rights. And when Mrs. Althorpe quoted to her old friend, who of course was a Bible Christian in her own estimation, that suggestive question from the lips of the incarnate God—"What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" she muttered discontentedly that "she knew nothing about *that*; she knew that people had bodies as well as souls; but if they *would* stand in their own light, there was no help for it that she could see—after all, it was none of her business, and she should give herself no more trouble about it."

Notwithstanding which laudable resolution the worthy housekeeper did trouble herself with almost daily soliloquies on the aggravating subject, especially after hearing that Willie had been confirmed, and thus bound by a new tie to the religion which stood between him and affluence. And there was Grace Morton—without doubt she would be turning Catholic next—Mrs. Wilson felt "as sure of that result as if it had already taken place—and she would be getting acquainted with the Althorpes; and that would cause fresh trouble—

Dear! dear, what was the reason that things were forever going wrong in this world!"

One of her apprehensions was soon realized. Grace continued to visit St. Peter's church, and a sort of acquaintanceship sprang up between her and Sophia Althorpe. On New Year's afternoon, when premiums were given to the Sunday-school children, she was surprised to hear one of them designated as Willie Stanislaus Althorpe, and looking eagerly to see who bore that name, she beheld the little boy whose singular beauty and gracefulness had won her admiration. In a moment the story related by the housekeeper two years before flashed upon her recollection, and she knew that the gloomy master of Oakdale was the bigoted father described under the name of Stone. For the first time the vesper service failed to engage her attention; thought was busy on a painful subject, and she determined no longer to enjoy the bounty of one whom she now regarded with abhorrence; a bounty extended to her at the expense of those justly entitled to it.

This resolution, however, was vehemently opposed by the housekeeper, who, on finding that the dreaded discovery had been made, exerted herself to calm the excited feelings of the young girl, whose innate love of justice revolted against Mr. Althorpe's proceedings, and made her blame herself for being, though innocently, accessory to them. She was pained also by the

contrast between her own elegant costume and the plain apparel of the Althorpes, especially of Sophia whom she had most particularly noticed; and regretted that she had ever gone into the presence of persons who, if they knew who she was, could not regard her with other than unfriendly feelings. But on this point Mrs. Wilson was able to reassure her, representing that Sophia would naturally have spoken to her of her new acquaintance, if she had had the least suspicion that the latter resided at Oakdale. Grace finally saw the absurdity of reproaching herself with being in any way the cause of Mr. Althorpe's continued neglect of his son's family, and that an appeal to him on their behalf, such as she had intended making, would not benefit them, while it would undoubtedly arouse his violent anger against her; and she derived much satisfaction from a hint thrown out by her companion that perhaps at no distant period she would be enabled by his generosity to herself, to be of service to those for whom her deepest sympathy was excited. She therefore gratified Mrs. Wilson by promising to "let things rest just as they were;" and still more by expressing her intention of keeping away from St. Peter's church for the future.

"Now, that's what I call sensible," replied the delighted woman, in a tone of hearty commendation that elicited a smile from Grace, depressed in spirit as she was by the revelations of the last few hours.

It had been so pleasant to her to think that the kindness shown to her and to her brother by the misanthropic old man was the result of his regard for her deceased parents. She had often pleased herself with imagining how strong must have been that friendship which neither time nor death had destroyed, and had thought how much their happiness must be increased if, "from their home beyond the skies," they were permitted to know that that friendship was now transferred to their orphan children. This had been the theme of many a pleasant fancy, now rudely dispelled. She knew that the kindness which had seemed to spring from a dear and precious memory, was only the caprice of a mind ill at ease, and seeking in every way to gratify its bitter and vindictive emotions.

Such a discovery could not fail to be painful to an ingenuous, affectionate disposition like hers, and almost equally so was the consequent change in her feelings towards "Uncle Althorpe," which she could not overcome, nor avoid showing in her manner. But he did not seem to notice the change. Indeed, since their sojourn at the Springs, he had appeared to care even less than formerly for her society, saying sometimes that he must accustom himself to dispense with her pleasant companionship, since he was soon to be deprived of it altogether. Grace was, therefore, left once more to interest and amuse herself as best she might,

and the winter would have seemed more dreary even than the previous ones, had it not been for her correspondence with Powhatan Clifton, whose long and pleasant letters beguiled the weary time of separation.

The Winter had nearly passed away, Grace had seen no more of the Althorpes, since, through delicate consideration for their feelings, she adhered to her purpose of avoiding the Catholic chapel; but she never failed to question the housekeeper about them after each of her frequent visits to their humble abode. One evening Mrs. Wilson brought sad intelligence. Sophia, who had been for several weeks confined to the house with a severe cold, had become suddenly so much worse that a physician had been hastily summoned, but too late to be of any avail; he could give no hope of her recovery; the utmost that his skill could do was to alleviate her sufferings during the few days she might yet linger on earth.

"Does she know his opinion?" asked Grace of the weeping housekeeper.

"Yes, she was prepared for death this morning, her mother told me—the sweet lamb, she was always prepared; she is going just like her father, like him in every way—it's enough to break a body's heart to see her."

The housekeeper gave way to a fresh burst of grief, in which she was joined by the sympathizing girl.

"How I would like to see her," exclaimed the latter after a long interval of mournful silence.

The words aroused her companion to a sudden recollection. She had only come home to give some directions to her grand-daughter, intending immediately to return to the village, and had promised the sick girl to bring Grace with her. "She heard who her church acquaintance was by accident," added the housekeeper, in answer to Grace's inquiring look,— "and when she asked me, of course I had to tell her all about you, and that made her the more anxious to see you. But make haste and get ready. I promised that we'd both spend the night with her, poor dear! Like enough Mr. Althorpe will be furious if he happens to find it out, but for my part I don't care for his rage."

"Nor I, on such an occasion," rejoined Grace, as she hastened to make ready for her walk.

She was received by Mrs. Althorpe and her daughters in a manner that proved that they cherished no unkindly feelings in regard to her position at Oakdale; and the eyes of Sophia sparkled with pleasure on again beholding one to whom she had taken a girlish fancy at their first meeting. Grace was inexpressibly shocked by the change in her appearance; she had persuaded herself that the Doctor had exaggerated the danger, but it needed but one glance at the pale, emaciated sufferer to tell that she was "going home."

Going home! O what a world of meaning is in those two little words to the true and fervent Christian! How the thought brightens the gloom of "the Valley of Death," cheers the drooping spirit, and enables it to enter unshrinkingly the dark path which all the children of earth must tread. To Sophia Althorpe death was in truth only "a going home." Fortified by all the holy rites with which the Church, that tender Mother, soothes and encourages her dying children, animated by the blissful hope of soon entering into the heavenly Jerusalem, and being made partakers in those exquisite delights which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive," she calmly awaited the moment of dissolution; humbly offering to her Father in heaven the acute sufferings she endured, and the pang of parting with those so dear to her affectionate heart, in union with the sufferings and death of Him who has robbed the grave of victory and taken from death its sting.

Grace, to whom the thought of death had hitherto been associated only with feelings of gloomy terror, learned a new and valuable lesson from the gentle invalid beside whom she spent as much time as possible. In that room she saw the beauty and holiness of the Faith to which she had felt drawn by a mysterious attraction, displayed in the brightest colors. There was piety the most fervent, without concealment or os-

tentation; much forgetfulness of self, and constant thoughtfulness for others. As she looked upon that innocent girl going meekly down to the grave after her brief life of poverty, toil and care, she seemed to see herself standing on the threshold of a life that now promised to her all that the world can bestow on its favorites. Love, wealth, social position, all that the human heart craves, and for which it too often sacrifices its birthright, would be hers; perhaps for many long and happy years; but when the sands of life grew low, would all those coveted possessions suffice to smooth the couch of pain? Would they shed upon *her* the light and glory with which religion illuminated the last hours of the poor, humble sufferer before her?

And the group that surrounded that death-bed with all of earth's passionate, yearning affection, chastened and sanctified by heavenly grace—the long-tried mother clinging to her first-born with love mightier than death—the fond sisters, the loving little brother—oh, how dear to them in this hour of trial was the religion for which they had renounced all hopes of earthly weal! Truly did they feel that if, as St. Teresa beautifully says, it is a great consolation at the hour of death to be a child of our Mother, the Holy Catholic Church, so is it also to the loving hearts which Death seems to rend with his rough ploughshare, in order to reach the one they fain would shelter from his stroke.

How hard it is to watch the last moments of the departing—to see the dear eyes grow dim with the mists of death—to hear the faint murmur of the loved voice, and to *know* it is *the last*—to mark the rigid immobility of death settle on those features which must soon be hid from our yearning gaze.

But even amid the tempest of sorrow that sweeps across the soul, Faith, like the bright rainbow, gleams through the clouds, and brightens the gloom. No, it is not the grave that has won our loved one—it is not with a vague hope, a shadowy uncertainty, that the spirit has gone in fear and doubt to meet its Judge—it is not to a strange, far-away land that it has gone from the love and care that blessed it here. How sweet to know that it has but gone to the arms of Him who has loved it with an eternal love—that it has joined the church triumphant, that glorious assembly of saints and angels with which it had often held sweet communion: or if some imperfections detain it yet from “that kingdom which nothing defiled can enter,” that we can relieve its sufferings, and hasten its admission to the presence of a God “whose mercy is above all His works.”

CHAPTER XI.

Brought into the Fold.

"Come to the Church of God,
 The House wherein is laid
 The blooming mystic Rod,
 For which the Prophets prayed.
 The Church where saint and sage,
 Of every age and clime
 Have passed their pilgrimage.
 In many a weary time."

It was Easter Sunday—grandest festival of the Catholic Church—dear to the Christian heart as the seal and confirmation of its faith and hope; "for, if Christ be not risen from the dead, our faith is vain."

The Paschal season came too late that year. April, with its changing skies, its coquettish smiles and tears, was far spent; the earth, favored with an unusually mild season, gave ample promise of the verdant luxuriance that was soon to cover it with gorgeous bloom. There was the indescribable beauty of the budding trees; the soft brown of the newly plowed soil, contrasting so richly with the bright emerald fields of winter grain; the tender young grass carpeting the mountain slopes; the cherry and pear and dogwood trees in full flower, looking as if snow had drifted

thickly over every bough; the maples were in the first crimson of their foliage. There was promise in the bright morning sunshine, and joy in the fresh morning breeze, already vocal with bird-song. Nature seemed to have arrayed itself in holiday guise to honor the great mystery of the Resurrection. From every steeple the bells rang out merrily, sounding as they never sound, save at Easter time, when one can fancy the voices of angels blend with their joyous chime, singing hymns of praise to the risen Lord, and congratulating a fallen race on being now raised to a prouder rank than it bore in the first days of innocence — no longer merely the creatures, the servants of the Most High, but also His children by adoption, co-heirs with His own eternal Son!

Some such thoughts as these floated through the mind of Grace Morton as she entered the hallowed portal of St. Peter's church, where on this glorious day was to be fulfilled in her regard the gracious promise, "Other sheep I have who are not of this fold: them also must I bring in, that there may be but one Fold under one Shepherd."

All doubt and hesitancy had passed away. Earnest study, and yet more earnest prayer, had convinced her that the Catholic religion is the dispenser of God's gifts and graces to man. The zealous pastor, whose ministrations at the death-bed and grave of Sophia

Althorpe, had impressed her with a realizing sense of the dignity and power of the sacerdotal office, had fully instructed her in the simple yet sublime truths of religion; had received her profession of faith, and, satisfied of the sincerity and fervor of her dispositions, now admitted her to the sacrament of regeneration, by which she was pledged to begin a new life, and to carry "the white robe of her baptismal innocence" without stain before the judgment-seat of Him from whose life-giving blood all the sacraments derive their efficacy. Mrs. Althorpe and her children, who had been witnesses to her profession of faith, surrounded the happy neophyte at the font, affectionately congratulating her on being a member of the true Church, entitled to share in all its privileges and blessings. She spent the day with this amiable family, most of the swift-winged hours being taken up with the solemn services which had now for her a new and deeper significance; while a brooding sense of happiness filled her whole being. That evening she sought not as usual the presence of Mrs. Wilson. Her new-born joy was of too sacred a nature to be revealed to her, nor did she wish to have her perfect feeling of peace and contentment so soon disturbed by the sneering remarks which would probably follow her communication. She deferred it, therefore, till the next day, when to her astonishment, the housekeeper listened without any symptoms of surprise or dissatisfaction, remaining si-

lent so long that Grace began to think she intended to treat the matter with silent contempt. At length she exclaimed abruptly—

"So you *have* turned Catholic—more fool you! But I'm not a bit surprised. I knew just how it would be from that unlucky Sunday when some ill wind blew you to *that* chapel."

"Some good wind, rather, mother Dora," interrupted Grace, laughing.

"And if I then had any doubts of it," continued the housekeeper, without heeding the interruption, "I had none after you once got in with the Althorpes."

"You were right," rejoined Grace. "I could not know that amiable family without desiring to share in the consolations that have supported them through many grievous trials. But," she added with an engaging smile, "I am glad that you foresaw the result of our friendship, and are not angry with me; and I love you more than ever, since it was through you that I obtained admission to that sick-room in which I learned the value of the true Faith."

"It was not through will or wish of mine, I can tell you. I was sorry enough to have to take you there, but poor Sophy had taken it into her head that she must see you, and how could I refuse? It was no little trouble to my mind to have to choose between

refusing her dying request, and doing what might lead you into trouble. I could not refuse her. So, if harm comes to you of it, I must bear the blame."

"Dear mother Wilson, no harm can come of it," cried Grace, eagerly. "Your compliance with her request has procured me a happiness which perhaps otherwise I might never know."

"Well, I'm glad you are satisfied; but if any trouble or loss was to come to you through it, I don't know that I could ever forgive myself. However, I hope there is no danger. Mr. Althorpe would discard you, of course, as he did those that were nearer to him, if he should happen to hear of your change of religion; but luckily he's away, and when he comes home there's no call for you to tell him what you've been about."

"I would not wish to act towards him with any deception," said Grace, thoughtfully.

"Now, Grace Morton, don't go to putting stumbling stones in your own way," was the impatient response.

"I dare say Mr. Clifton will be coming soon to take you off, and after that, if the secret gets out, it can do you little harm here. I hope now that he will come soon, for fear anything *might* turn up—but, dear me, won't it be lonesome here after you are gone!"

"You had better go with me, good mother. I am sure I will miss you as much as you will me."

"Not quite," said the housekeeper, laughing. "I

guess you'll make out to be contented without me. And I may as well bid you good-bye for the rest of the day, for there comes Sam from the post-office, and I have a notion that he's got the letter you've been expecting."

Sam had the letter, and Grace, blushingly escaping from the housekeeper's good humored raillery, flew to her room to peruse again and again its precious pages.

CHAPTER XII.

Conflicts.

"Do the duty nearest thee,
 Ask not what the end will be;
 Shrink not, though thy hopes must fade,
 And self be on the altar laid!
 Fame may beckon thee away,
 Love allure thy steps to stray;
 Love and fame the price may be—
 Dare not from thy work to flee."

Powhatan's return to the North had been delayed by his duties in the Legislature, where an important measure was pending, which he deemed of vital interest to the State, and to promote the passage of which his position, as one of the leaders of his political party, required him to devote all his talents and energies. Strongly opposed by the other party, the bill was the staple subject of debate week after week, its friends eagerly watching an opportunity to "put it through," and its enemies as pertinaciously laboring to defeat it; and so nearly balanced were the contending parties, that both shrank from the final vote, while each put forth every effort to secure a triumph.

As the weeks dragged slowly by, Powhatan's patience was sorely tired, and he had many a struggle

between duty and inclination—one binding him like a sentinel to his post, the other constantly urging him to fling every consideration to the winds, and repair to the spot which held "the loadstone of his thoughts." He had indemnified himself in some degree by writing to her every few days, keeping her thoroughly "posted" on the state of affairs, with all his hopes of success and fears of failure; so that she had learned to regard the subject with an interest akin to his own; and her letters, glowing with hope and enthusiasm, had helped him to endure the tedium of delay. She had also ventured to make some suggestions which he embraced in an amendment, thereby disposing two or three on the other side to look with more favor on the bill, though its leading features were in no way altered. This result the delighted lover lost no time in communicating to her whom he styled the real amender of the bill, telling her she deserved to be the wife of a statesman, and Grace's heart had throbbed with rapture as she read it, for sweet is praise from the beloved.

His present letter was in a strain of mingled triumph and chagrin. "The bill had passed by the tremendous majority of *one*"—and he had little doubt of its becoming a law, though it was yet on trial in the other house, where an effort was being made to alter some of its most essential provisions. A committee of conference had been appointed, of which he was a

member; and thus, at the very time he had fancied himself free, he found himself still held a prisoner by his pet measure. From the tone of the closing sentences, Grace perceived that he was much inclined to break away from his bonds; and fearing that his impetuous nature would hurry him into an act which he might afterwards regret, she penned a long, encouraging letter, which she hoped would have the same effect he had attributed to her former ones, of teaching him patience—that lesson so hard for the eager spirit of manhood to learn.

Having sent this to the post-office, and lingered for a while in chat with Mrs. Wilson, she returned to her apartment, and gave herself up to one of those delicious day-dreams in which the young, happy spirit is prone to indulge. Starting, at length, from her reverie, she remembered with an emotion of self-reproach that she had allowed the day to slip away in idleness, with scarcely a thought of Him to whose service she had devoted herself the previous morning, and utterly forgetful of the advice of her confessor to dedicate a portion of each day to spiritual reading, in order that she might become better acquainted with the teachings of the religion she had adopted.

“Alas!” thought she, “how true it is that earthly hopes and affections beguile us from the remembrance

of heaven! how easy it is to forget God while thoughtlessly enjoying the blessings he lavishes upon us!”

Resolutely putting away the letter which tempted her to another perusal, she took up the “Rules of a Christian Life,” a book which had been especially recommended to her. Why, as she read, did the rich color that had at first suffused her cheeks, fade away, and her eyes wander with a half-terrified expression to the crucifix on a table by her side? She had opened the volume at the chapter “On Matrimony,” and as she read, came to the following passage;

“There is no situation in life more melancholy than that of a young lady, sincerely pious, united to a man destitute of religious principles, though he may, in other respects, be entitled to her esteem and affection. What a perpetual and painful restraint for a heart glowing with divine love, not to dare communicate her pious feeling to one who is, for her, more than a bosom friend! In the hours of mental or bodily sufferings, which we are all liable to experience some day or other in this state of probation, what an excruciating anguish to see him quite insensible to the comforts which are derived from religion! This is not an imaginary case. I have met with several ladies under such hard trials. In those solitary moments, when the soul, disengaged from those exterior and active occupations which absorb, as it were, all its faculties, it involuntarily led to

serious reflections, there arose in them a sort of indefinite uneasiness they could give no account of, and some secret apprehensions which, not being able to dispel, disturbed their inward peace, and embittered every pleasure which it was given them to enjoy. At the approach of an imminent danger, and at the thought of a separation which they could not help fearing might be eternal, distracted between the desire of speaking, and the fear of doing more harm than good, by perhaps, unseasonable entreaties and unacceptable observations—their anxieties and dismal forebodings, their anguish of conscience and self-reproach (oftentimes without solid grounds) for not having availed themselves of opportunities which they then imagined had occurred, could not easily be described; and it was with great difficulty that I could calm their distracted minds, and afford some relief to their afflicted hearts.”

Instinctively applying this language to her own circumstances, Grace was struck with its appositeness. Had she not already experienced the “painful restraint” spoken of, since, from a secret feeling, perfectly intelligible to her heart, though she would have been unable to express it in words, she had made no mention of her conversion in the letter to Powhatan Clifton! Was this then “the mutual confidence” which she had fondly thought existed between them? With a dark foreboding of coming sorrow, she closed

the book and tried to banish the subject from her mind, but an irresistible feeling prompted her to resume it.

“That the pious example of an amiable wife has sometimes overcome, by insensible degrees, the irreligious or erroneous principles of her husband, I shall not deny; yes, I willingly acknowledge it. The unbelieving husband may be sanctified by the believing wife: (1 Cor. vii. 14.) There are several instances of it. But how many pious women, expecting the same result from their union with those differing from their sentiments with regard to religion, have been disappointed in their expectations? How many have experienced, to their great surprise and grief, that their most tender and gentle insinuations respecting religious matters, have been eluded by evasive answers, and, if too frequently repeated, rejected even with strong marks of impatience and displeasure. How many have found that their only resource was silence and incessant prayer; and their only hope of a happy change, the infinite goodness and mercy of God, who does not wish for the death of the sinner, but that he may be converted and live. The highest and noblest enjoyment of social life consists in communication of knowledge, and reciprocation of sentiments. . . .

“But can that reciprocation of sentiments long subsist between husband and wife, when there is a difference of religious opinions? Being influenced by dif-

ferent motives, they will judge and decide almost every question upon different principles. In their habitual and familiar intercourse with each other, there will arise many unexpected and unforeseen occasions of variance. To comply against the dictates of conscience is to betray the cause of God, and to maintain friendship by ceasing to deserve it. To be silent is to live in perpetual restraint; to try by arguments to enforce one's opinions is to open a wide door to endless dissensions. Who shall determine which of the two—the wife or the husband—is to yield, when each believes the other to be mistaken, and both confess the importance of the subject? What then remains but contradiction and debate! And from these what can be expected but vexation, and in time, weariness of contest, and extinction of confidence? Exchange of endearments and an appearance of friendship may, indeed, continue, as boughs may for a time remain verdant after the root is wounded; but the poison of discord is infused, and though the countenance may preserve its smile, the heart is hardening and contracting. . . .

“A delicate and timid female, sincerely attached to her husband, must be animated with a solid and strong faith—she must have a great command over her feelings, and possess rare fortitude of mind and well-trying evenness of temper, to bear, without showing any

signs of impatience, but with mildness and a smile of benevolence on her countenance, the railleries to which she may often be exposed by her faithful adherence to the ordinances of the Catholic Church. The fasts and abstinence which she prescribes on some particular days, the frequentation of the sacraments, especially confession—in short, the various practices of piety which she recommends or approves of, offer to the unbelieving husband a constant theme of sneers and sarcasms. These inconveniences, and sometimes occasions of unpleasant little contentions, viewed at a distance and with eyes prepossessed by love, appear mere trifles, easily to be overcome, or, at least, supported without much trouble. But their recurrence renders them a heavy burden and a galling yoke. In order to be delivered from them, there is a great temptation for the wife to think that, for the sake of peace and harmony, she might *appear* to give up some of her sentiments, and yield to the satisfaction of others, rather than rigorously exact her own imprescriptible rights. Thus, after various struggles between her conscience and her inclinations, she may be imperceptibly brought to condescensions not always consistent with her strict obligations: her pious feelings and former fears are looked upon as scruples; that inward voice, which admonishes her of her duties, grows fainter and fainter every day; her human respect, and the maxims o

worldly wisdom gain the upper hand, and by degrees, stifle the principles of eternal truth. By a continuance of slight deviations from the right road, and, as she falsely persuades herself, excusable and even reasonable omissions, she may be drawn into very grievous sins without remorse, and fall into a state of indifference concerning the most necessary precautions to secure the salvation of her soul. . . .

“ Many have failed to obtain happiness for want of considering that marriage is the strictest tie of perpetual friendship ; that there cannot be friendship without confidence, and no real and lasting confidence without a similarity of moral and religious principles ; and that she must expect to be wretched, who pays to rank, riches, wit, politeness, or elegance of manners, that regard which only virtue and piety can claim.”

With a troubled mind Grace pondered over these various passages. During the past weeks she had indulged many pleasing visions of being the means of winning her heart's chosen one from the soul-destroying creed of infidelity. She had anticipated leading him gently on by imperceptible steps to the abandonment of his cherished opinions, and seeing him at length, in the humblest of faith, offering at the altar of God all those splendid gifts with which He had endowed him. But a previous paragraph from the same pious author dispelled these delightful fancies.

“ She hopes that in the intimacy of connubial relations, she will have many opportunities of removing his prejudices, and of insinuating her religious sentiments into his heart ; and that ultimately she will have the comfort of bringing him to a sense of his error, and converting him to the true faith. Under this impression she will consider that her first objections on account of difference of religion were carried too far, and consequently that they are not such an insurmountable obstacle to their union as she at first feared. Nay, we are so prone to sanctify all the means which may lead to the accomplishment of our ardent desires, that she will think she is actuated by the most holy and disinterested motives, and, by yielding to her natural inclinations, only follows the inspirations of divine grace, and complies with the designs of a merciful Providence that intends to make her instrumental in the conversion of a soul.”

Grace could read no farther. The book fell unheeded to the floor, as leaning her throbbing brow upon her hand, she strove to reflect calmly on the subject thus suddenly presented to her consideration. But that was impossible. Tumultuous thoughts of the past and of the future seemed to rush over her like a resistless storm ; and with her mind wrought up to a feverish pitch of excitement, and her heart growing sick with anxiety and dread, she vainly tried to argue with herself the question that seemed distinctly put to her by a

voice she could not help hearing—was it not her duty to renounce the love which, alas! had never been as dear and precious as in that hour? Amid all the thoughts that chased each other with lightning rapidity through her mind, this was ever uppermost, and with it a remark once made to her by Mrs. Althorpe, to the effect that “the Catholic religion is one of renunciation and sacrifice.” How grand and inspiring that idea had seemed; now, it was like the stern decree of some relentless task-master—and in an agony of dread she wailed aloud, “O no, no! If *this* be the sacrifice required of me, I cannot make it.” The strange sound of her voice startled her from the absorption of bitter thought. With flushed cheeks and dilated eyes she gazed wildly around, as if half fearing to meet some terrible vision; she tried to pray, but her soul was as if suddenly cut loose from its moorings, and left to drift helplessly on the wide sea of temptation. With a long shuddering sigh, she sank back feebly under the tyrant sway of doubt and fear.

These now were the glowing visions that had filled her mind during the day just passed! She had imagined herself treading with unfaltering steps the rugged heights of sacrifice, penetrating the dark depths of humiliation, joyfully accepting suffering, aye, even martyrdom; and had thought how easy and how glorious it would be to endure all for the sake of Him who

haddrawn her “to Him with the cords of Adam, with the bonds of love.” Now, when the opportunity was presented of realizing some of those lofty imaginings, she shrunk back in dismay. So the long hours wore wearily on—the night passed in sleeplessness, or in fitful snatches of slumber, disturbed by painful dreams, and the cheerful light of another day only brought an added sense of wretchedness—a new struggle as exhausting as the previous one, and as vain. An utter weariness and disgust of everything took possession of her. Prayer brought no light to her darkened soul—reflections, which had been wont to arouse the spirit of devotion, made no impression on her heart. The image of her absent lover seemed to rise before her, sadly reproaching her for having harbored even for a moment the thought of giving him up. With a nervous shiver she recalled the warning text, “Make not to yourselves idols,” confessing to herself that she has indeed made an idol of him. She remembered her first emotion of horror on learning his infidel principles—how soon she had brought herself to think lightly of them, while every feeling of her nature went out toward him, making him in truth the idol of a heart which until then had found no object on which to lavish its wealth of love. And now, when her soul had been darkened to the knowledge of a love higher, holier than earth can yield, must she sacrifice that earthly affection on the

altar of duty, and in so doing, inflict on another heart a wound similar to that which must rend her own ?

Another day and night were spent in this wearisome conflict, and at length she resolved to explain all her difficulties to Mrs. Althorpe, and to be guided by her counsel. The usual friendly welcome was extended to her, and she was easily persuaded to spend the day with her new friends. Indeed, that humble abode seemed much more like a home in her eyes than the stately solitude of Oakdale. The younger members of the family were pleasant companions, and she regarded Mrs. Althorpe with feelings of almost filial respect and affection. Looking with girlish admiration on that lovely countenance, upon which care and sorrow had left so little trace, while it was illumined with the serene expression that told she possessed "that peace which the world can neither give nor take away," Grace had often marvelled how she had preserved that tranquillity of soul amid the many and grievous trials that had fallen to her lot. And as she now with many blushes and tears acquainted that true Christian matron with her fears and anxieties, the young girl almost hoped that her sympathizing auditor could impart to her the secret of that unalterable peace of mind that perfect submission to the will of God, of which she gave so beautiful an example.

Grace had fallen into a common error, mistaking the ardent feelings of a warm heart and lively imagination for the earnest, solemn resolution which can alone be depended on in the hour of trial ; forgetting in her enthusiastic ardor that sacrifice and self-denial are always attended with difficulty and repugnance. During her long conversation with Mrs. Althorpe, she became conscious of her mistakes ; saw that she had been foolishly struggling in her own strength to resist temptation, and that she had unthinkingly aspired to the crown given only to those who have fought well, without preparing herself for the stern conflict with self, which must precede the victory.

"But, dear Mrs. Althorpe," she said at last, "have I not allowed my mind to be harassed by idle fears ? Perhaps Almighty God does not demand this sacrifice of me. Do *you* think He does ? You know the Church allows her children to marry persons of a different belief."

"True," was the reply, "the Church tolerates such marriages, but does not approve of them. But I cannot pretend to advise you, my dear Grace, nor help you to form a decision on so important a question. The advice of your confessor is the only guidance you can safely follow in this matter ; it is through him that you may hope to learn the will of God in reference to a

subject so closely connected with your eternal interests."

Grace had not thought of this. Well instructed on all the doctrines of the faith she had embraced, she knew comparatively little as yet of its wonderful adaptedness to every need of the human heart. She had yet to experience the various advantages and consolations of the sacred tribunal of penance, where the priest of God is not only the judge invested with the power of forgiving and retaining sins, but also the inspired counsellor of those who in seasons of doubt and temptation—when the clouds of prejudice and the delusions of self-love obscure their souls, and the suggestions of the wily adversary, who can make the worse appear the better reason, fill them with perplexity—apply to him for the light and instruction they need to guide their uncertain steps, and calm their troubled minds.

Cheered and encouraged by her visit, Grace returned home, and resolutely putting in practice the advice of her friends, found that the conflict between duty and inclination gradually grew less severe. But soon the temptation took a new form. In the first ardor of her conversion, she had planned to do great things for God and His Church when installed mistress of a fair Virginia home. Was it not a pity to lose the opportunity of carrying out those laudable schemes? And then

what an important influence would her decision have on the interests of persons very dear to her. It was certain that the bigoted owner of Oakdale would immediately withdraw his favor from her, and probably from her brother also—was it right to jeopardise all *his* future prospects? And her well-devised plans for helping the Althorpes, whose dreary struggle with poverty was growing worse and more hopeless—must these be given up?

Such thoughts might pain the generous heart of the young convert, but could not disturb the tranquility of a mind now animated by an humble, sincere desire to submit to the Divine will. From the wise and fatherly counsels of her director, she was learning how to take up her cross, and if at times the burthen seemed almost insupportable, a few moments passed in prayer and and penitence before her crucifix, settled the rising tumult of rebellious feeling. And when, on one of the fairest mornings of May, she joined the little band now admitted, for the first time to the heavenly banquet, to eat of "the living bread that came down from heaven," did she not then experience how full of loving kindness is the God whom she meekly tried to serve? Oh! in that hour of holy rapture, how insignificant appeared the world, its vanities, its hopes, its joys! How poor and empty seemed all human consolations.

And while, with all the fervor of a soul now first tasting the sweetness of the Lord, she poured forth transports of joy, gratitude and love, she realized how sweet to the loving heart is every sacrifice it makes for Jesus!

CHAPTER XIII.

The Sacrifice.

"Over the cross shineth the crown;
Bravely bear up, though earthly hope go down—
Angels are on thy side,
And Heaven about thee, let what will betide."

"So Mr. Clifton has not come yet," was almost the first remark of Mr. Althorpe, on returning home after an absence of some weeks. "I expected to find him here on my return—this protracted delay seems unreasonable."

A frown gathered on his brow as he spoke, for though he was in no haste to have his ward married, he was not one to submit to any trifling.

Grace hastened to explain the cause of Powhatan's prolonged absence, adding that in his last letter he had told her to expect him by the last of the month at farthest.

"Ah!" was the only comment made, and Mr. Althorpe went on to the library ere Grace informed him of the tenor of her last letter to Powhatan Clifton, a letter which would separate their fortunes forever. She therefore thought it best to make no farther reference

to the subject until the arrival of the reply which she now daily expected. It came not, but to her surprise Powhatan suddenly made his appearance at Oakdale.

Mr. Althorpe and the housekeeper welcomed him as cordially as he could have anticipated. Grace alone seemed to consider his coming inopportune; and her demeanor, in spite of all her efforts, was cold and constrained. This, however, he seemed determined not to notice; he was in the highest spirits, his political hopes having been crowned with success; and he claimed her congratulations and her opinions on other schemes, as one who had no interest apart from his. She saw that her faith was to be put to a farther test, and by earnest prayer fortified her soul for the trying hour at hand. The ardent lover took an early opportunity to acquaint Mr. Althorpe with his desire for an immediate marriage with his ward, and having received that gentleman's consent, hastened to urge her "to name an early day." Grace in some confusion mentioned her last letter, which, from his confident manner, she began to fear he had not received.

"My own love surely does not imagine that that letter, or rather the matter to which it referred, can in any way interfere with our arrangements," he answered with a bright smile. "I own to having been a little surprised by that communication, and slightly provoked by the concluding portion, which so plainly inti-

mated that our correspondence must henceforth cease. Grace! Grace! how could you have been so cruel as to pen *such* an epistle?"

His gay, unconscious air added to the distress of his companion. Her resolution never wavered, but her gentle heart grieved for the pain which her answer must give. As she remained silent, he went on to say in a graver tone, that no difference in religion could cause any estrangement between them; that, although he had never fettered his mind by the doctrines of any creed, he had no objection to others embracing any religion they chose, and was not at all displeased that his chosen one had become a member of the venerable Church which he respected as the munificent patron of art and conservator of knowledge during successive ages of turbulence and barbarism.

"And so my liege lady may depend on having her own sweet way in this as in all other matters," he added laughingly, while he watched the expressive countenance that betrayed the varying emotions of her heart. "She may ornament *our home* with crucifixes and statues and pictures of every saint in the calendar, if she will—may fast, and pray, and give alms as much as her religion commands; (I know enough about it to be certain that it requires its votaries to be well practiced in all these good works)—may entertain the clergy and hierarchy as often and as hospitably as she wishes,

and even incite them to undertake the conversion of her ungodly husband. Now, my love, I hope I have set at rest all the little scruples of your delicate conscience. So be your own bewitching self once more—do you know that you are allowing me to do all the talking?"

"Dear friend, what can I say but repeat words which you do not wish to hear?" replied Grace, with sad firmness. "Indeed, it must be as I wrote—"

He would not allow her to proceed. Seizing her hand, he poured forth a torrent of entreaties and reproaches, protesting that he would never give her up, that no power should separate them, knowing as he did that her heart was all his own.

"No, not all," she said softly. "There is One who has a higher place in its affections."

"Grace!" The word was uttered in a tone of suppressed rage; his face grew dark and rigid; the blue veins on his lofty brow swelled like cords. The next moment, in an altered tone, he said, "No! no! it is impossible—I will never believe that you love another."

"Yet it is true." Her tone would not admit of farther doubt.

"True that you love another more than me? Oh! Grace Morton," he cried chokingly, "have I deserved this? Do you believe that his love can ever equal mine?"

"O how far it surpasses it!" Her voice trembled with sweet emotion, and though the uplifted face was very pale, an expression of holy rapture beamed from the tearful eyes. "No mortal mind can fathom the depth, the tenderness of His love."

"I understand you," he cried eagerly, his countenance brightening with renewed hope. "I promise not to be jealous, dear Grace—it was an earthly rival I feared. Nay, I cannot release this little trembler," he continued, with a look of tender fondness as she strove to withdraw her hand from his warm clasp. "I must hold it prisoner till its dear, capricious owner tells me what day I may claim it as my own."

"O Powhatan, that can never, never be!" exclaimed Grace. "Do not, I beseech you, urge me farther. Duty bids us part—I can never be yours."

"Don't be so unreasonable, Grace." Her quivering lip and husky voice touched him deeply, and curbing his impatience, he spoke with soothing gentleness. "Our love dates farther back than the change in your religious opinions; it has a prior claim, a claim which you cannot in honor or justice ignore. I pledge you my word as a gentleman that your religion shall never be interfered with. What more can I say? O Grace, why do you not trust my love as fully as I trust yours?"

Those impassioned accents, those looks of deep,

devoted affection—how hard for poor Grace to resist them. How the fond, yearning heart longed to yield to the voice of love—could aught in life or death ever exceed the bitterness of that hope! Tears of agony streamed down her pale cheeks, as she uttered a faint petition that alone could sustain her—"My God! my Saviour! forsake me not—suffer me not to be tempted beyond my strength!"

Low as was the murmur, Powhatan caught its import. He thought he had conquered, and throwing his arms around her, cried exultingly, "Mine—mine forever! Such love as ours was not given to be crushed out, my own love; nothing can separate us."

But her momentary weakness was past. The aid she had invoked was not withheld from the sorely-tried spirit, and when she spoke again, her voice was so firm that Powhatan, in amazement, allowed her to withdraw from his embrace. "Let us not prolong a scene that can only increase our pain," she said quietly. "Dear friend, my best wishes go with you." She held out her hand, her voice again trembling as she uttered the words of farewell, and he saw that further entreaty was vain.

"And this is the effect of religious teachings!" The young Virginian sprang to his feet, his lip curling in bitter sarcasm. "The most sacred vows lightly broken; the fondest hopes ruthlessly crushed; hearts

united by the fondest love rudely severed. Behold the blessed fruits of a divine creed!"

Grace raised her eyes to his with an expression of sad reproach, that touched his better feelings even in that moment of angry passion. "Ah!" she said, mournfully, "see how soon you find fault with the faith that is dearer to me than life. And only a few minutes ago you would have persuaded me that you were half disposed to adopt it for your own."

"And I spoke sincerely. From my soul I believe that what is so dear to you would ere long be equally precious to me," he replied with passionate fervor. "But think you I can admire or love a creed that compels you to trample on the heart which beats for you alone, which would sacrifice earth, aye, and heaven, if there is one, sooner than part from you? As well expect the mangled wretch to love the cruel rack that tears his quivering flesh."

"Do you think I suffer nothing?"

The face that was lifted to his was so pallid, so grief-stricken, that for a moment the lover was too much moved to reply. "Too well I know what you suffer," he said at length, in a voice full of pitying tenderness. "Could I read that letter of renunciation without feeling the deep heart-sorrow that broke through its formal sentences? Do I not know that at this moment you are crushed by a weight of anguish too grievous to be borne?"

"Be generous," pleaded Grace, "and do not add to my burden—as we must part, let not the last moments we spend together be embittered by reproaches."

"We must part," he repeated. "Is this your final decision?"

"It is," replied Grace with mournful firmness.

"So be it." He turned from her in anger, and strode away without a word or glance of farewell.

And Grace—ah! 'tis hard for loving hearts to part even in tenderness and with the hope of a speedy reunion; but how agonizing to part forever, in coldness or in anger, rudely tearing away the ties that had long bound them together. With her clinging, sensitive disposition, Grace felt the full anguish of such a parting, but she turned with unshaken constancy and love to Him who in requiring of her the sacrifice of her heart's most cherished feelings, was ready to support her weakness by His own all sustaining power. While she still knelt before the image of "the Man of Sorrows," offering to Him the thorns that pierced her loving heart, a rap at the door, and Mrs. Wilson's voice exclaiming, "Gracie, come quick, your uncle wants you!" startled her to a recollection that another agitating scene awaited her.

"I cannot go," she faltered, "dear mother Wilson, excuse me to uncle till to-morrow."

"Can't do it, you must come down at once,"

whispered the housekeeper, through the keyhole; "jist open the door and let me come in."

Grace reluctantly turned the key, and the housekeeper darting in closed the door and whispered in breathless haste, "What *have* you been doing, Gracie? Mr. Althorpe is in such a rage as I never saw him in but once before, and Mr. Clifton tore out of the house like a madman—dear, he gave me such a fright. I was just coming through the hall, and heard your uncle who was following him, say, 'If you will but wait one moment'—but he never seemed to hear but just dashed away; and the old gentleman was starting to come up stairs when he saw me, and told me to send you down to the library immediately."

"You are sure Mr. Clifton is not with him?" said Grace, as the housekeeper paused to take breath. "Then I will go—better after all to have it over at once," she sighed to herself as she bathed her flushed face, and hurriedly began to smooth her hair.

"What on earth has happened, Grace?—but mercy! you're all in a tremble, here sit down a minute and and give me that brush;" and compassion overcoming her curiosity, Mrs. Wilson took the hair brush from the nerveless fingers, while Grace, pressing her hands to her aching brow, silently prayed for strength to complete the sacrifice she had begun.

The housekeeper had not exaggerated in speaking

of Mr. Althorpe being in a rage. As Grace entered the library he turned to her with a fierce demand for an explanation of the farce she had been playing with Mr. Clifton; adding that "he had never thought her capable of stooping to act the part of a heartless coquette."

"Your partiality did not mislead you in that respect, dear uncle," replied Grace, coloring a little at the implied charge; "I have never had the inclination nor the power to practice the arts of coquetry."

"What other name can be applied to your present conduct?" he resumed angrily. "Mr. Clifton has been your acknowledged suitor for almost a year; you gave him every reason to believe his feelings were reciprocated—maintained a regular correspondence with him—you knew that he was coming North for no other purpose than to make you his wife—you allowed him to come, yet when, with my entire approval, he urged you to name an early day for the wedding, you dismissed him with a refusal so decided that he would not postpone his departure until I could have a talk with you upon the subject, though I represented that you had surely acted only from a sudden caprice—a sorry explanation in truth, young lady, but I fear the best that can be offered."

"Then Mr. Clifton did not tell you why I rejected him," said Grace, in some surprise.

"Do you imagine that a man like Powhatan Clifton can enter into a long discussion on the why and wherefore of such an unpardonable affront as you have given him? He told me nothing but the mere fact that he was rejected—a most discreditable one for you, and for me as your guardian. If there is any excuse for your conduct I shall be glad to hear it."

"But let me assure you, Uncle Althorpe, that Mr. Clifton was not ignorant of the change in my sentiments when he came to Oakdale," began Grace. "My last letter to him plainly expressed my wish that our correspondence should cease, and gave what I deemed sufficient reasons for the request."

Mr. Althorpe looked surprised. "Perhaps he did not receive that letter. He did? Then your reasons for changing your mind so suddenly must have seemed to him less conclusive than to yourself. But I am glad to hear this, as it exonerates you from the charge of wilfully trifling with a lover's feelings." The old gentleman's countenance lost some of its angry expression, and he went on in a more friendly tone. "Now for those weighty reasons, Grace, I am really curious to know what objection you can have to Mr. Clifton."

"Only one, dear uncle, but that one I could not in conscience overlook. His infidel principles oppose an insurmountable barrier between us."

Mr. Althorpe's features relaxed into a smile, and he regarded her with a look of mingled pity and amusement. "So that is the weighty reason! Poor child! you have been reading some religious romance lately, I presume, and have an ambition to imitate the saintly heroine. Not the first young lady who has imbibed such notions and laughed at them afterwards. In a few months, perhaps in a few weeks, this sudden fit of enthusiasm will fade away, leaving you to wonder how you could ever have thought of sacrificing the happiness of two lives on the altar of fanaticism. As soon as you feel this symptom of returning reason, my dear girl, just give me a hint and I will arrange matters to the satisfaction of all parties."

Mr. Althorpe affected a jocoseness quite at variance with his usual manner. Too shrewd to endeavor to combat the sudden fit of enthusiasm, "he hoped by treating it thus carelessly, to bring the young girl to regard it in the same light, and be heartily ashamed of her folly. But this hope was dispelled when she assured him that she had not acted from a sudden impulse, but only after long and earnest consideration, and that nothing could induce her to deviate from the course she had adopted.

The guardian frowned, but controlling his impatience replied—"I have a higher opinion of you than to believe you will persist in this nonsense. Mr. Clifton is

every way worthy of you, and all my hopes in your regard will be fulfilled on the day when I salute you as his bride."

"That day will never come, dear uncle, I will *never* be the bride of an infidel."

"Tush! he is no more of an infidel than I am, and I believe, Miss Gracie, you have not found me a very terrible guardian."

"The best, the kindest guardian that ever a poor orphan girl had," replied Grace with grateful warmth, tears dimming her eyes as she thought how soon this pleasant relationship would end.

The old gentleman with visible satisfaction answered laughingly. "That is an exaggerated compliment, I am afraid, but it is pleasant to learn that the ward is as satisfied with her guardian as he is with her, or rather as he was until within the last hour. Trust me, Gracie, you will find an irreligious husband not a whit more terrible than an irreligious guardian. And now I remember that almost at the commencement of our acquaintance with Mr. Clifton, we became aware of his views on the subject of religion, and you did not then deem them so objectionable."

"My own were but little better at the time," said Grace, sadly.

Her companion's smile gave place to a sneer. "Ah! you've been getting religion, as the cant phrase runs."

I gave you credit for possessing more common sense. Pray which one among the thousand warring sects of Christendom has the honor of counting Miss Morton among its devotees?"

"I have not joined any of those sects, uncle," said Grace quietly, "I have become a Catholic."

The decisive moment had come. Grace rose from her seat, and with a calmness that surprised herself, awaited the storm of anger which she expected would follow her revelation. But instead there was an interval of silence more expressive of the malignant passion she had aroused than the most violent invectives could be. Had she glanced at her companion she would have been shocked to see his countenance fearfully distorted by the fierce rage which could find no words adequate to the occasion; but with delicate consideration she kept her eyes veiled beneath their long lashes, and at length deeming that her absence would be a relief to him, she glided towards the door. An imperative glance detained her. "One moment, madam."

He unlocked a cabinet as he spoke, and taking out a paper laid it on a table, requesting her with the same constrained calmness to do him the favor of reading it, Grace silently obeyed, and found that it was the will of her self-constituted guardian, and that by it all his property with the exception of a few trifling bequests, was divided equally between her and her brother

Alfred. When she had perused the document he took it from her hand and deliberately tore it into fragments saying at the same time with an air of perfect composure, though his eyes still gleaned with a baleful light.—

"Miss Morton will doubtless find consolation in her religion for the loss of earthly goods."

"You are right, sir," said Grace gently, feeling only pity for the misguided old man whose bigotry had been the bane of his life. "In the Church of God I shall find ample compensation for all I thus lose. Neither do I blame you, Mr. Althorpe, for you have surely the right to dispose of your property as you please. I have received many favors at your hands, and the debt of gratitude I owe you is not lessened by this unexpected evidence of the generous intentions towards me which you formerly entertained."

Her mildness and composure provoked Mr. Althorpe still more. "Of course. I could not presume to insult the *brother* of such a *saint* by carrying out my original intentions in his regard. 'Twere a pity to burden either one with the property of an *irreligious man*."

Looking sharply at the young girl as he spoke, he had the satisfaction of seeing that she was deeply wounded by his insulting words, and exulting in the pain he was inflicting, resumed in a still more cutting manner—

"Religion will also sustain Miss Morton under the

circumstances, which would be grievous to a worldly-minded person, that she is the cause of her brother being thrown penniless and friendless upon the world, to earn his bread as he best may, and to encounter all the dangers and temptations that always beset a youth wild, high-spirited and poor."

Grace could not listen to this in silence. Her eyes flashed haughtily, and her tone was almost as sarcastic as his own as she said,

"It is no crime to be poor, Mr. Althorpe, and I should far rather see my brother so than to know that—"

She broke off abruptly. Her next words would have revealed her knowledge of his injustice towards his son's family, but a fear of exciting his suspicions against Mrs. Wilson as her informant kept back the words she longed to utter, Mr. Althorpe finished the sentence according to his own impression of her meaning.

"Than to know that he was the heir of an infidel! but probably he will not agree with you."

Grace heard him not, she had rushed from his presence to give vent to her sorely tried feelings in a passion of tears, she had anticipated a stormy scene with the bigoted old man, and had prepared some kind and gentle phrases by which she hoped to mollify his anger; but shortly unprepared for the cruel, insulting taunts by which he had thought proper to mark his

displeasure, no wonder that her patience gave way, and she was goaded into momentary forgetfulness of her resolution to endeavor meekly to overcome evil with good."

But the tumult of angry passion gradually calmed, and tears of heartfelt penitence succeeded those of wounded feeling. She reproached herself, for having yet acquired so little of "charity that beareth all things in humble imitation of Him who when He was reviled, reviled not again;" and yielding without reserve to the gentle influence of the faithful monitor within, she soon learned to think of Mr. Althorpe with pitying forgiveness, feeling that she could never understand what a fierce volcano of anger and hatred the simple words—"I am a Catholic—" had awakened within him. And since a similar avowal long years ago had estranged from him forever his own only one, how could she wonder at his treatment of her?

The next morning Grace prepared to leave Oakdale. Anticipating the necessity of such a procedure she had arranged to stay at Mrs. Althorpe's until her plans should be fully matured. Her sacrifice was now complete. Love, home, fortune, had all been freely given up, and her present position, with scarcely a dollar in her possession, and no friend save the housekeeper and the poor family in the village, was sufficiently glowing to daunt even the buoyant spirit of nineteen. But she

thought not of it now. The reaction of intense excitement rendered her languid and indifferent, and she mechanically pursued her task scarcely realizing the sudden change in her situation. She had not seen Mr. Althorpe since the previous evening, and having finished packing she was hesitating whether to bid him farewell personally or in writing; when Mrs. Wilson appeared with a note which she handed her in grim silence. It informed her that Mr. Althorpe had written to her stepfather, and that until the arrival of an answering communication from that gentleman, he wished her to consider Oakdale as her home. Having voluntarily assumed the guardianship of herself and brother, he deemed it his duty not to relinquish it without the knowledge of their connexions.

When she read the note Grace requested the housekeeper who was leaving the room to wait a moment while she wrote an answer.

"He does not expect any, I guess," said Mrs. Wilson.

"But I must send him one nevertheless," replied Grace with an air of calm decision, "It was of little use I think, to write to my stepfather; and while awaiting a reply which perhaps will never come, I cannot consent to remain in the house of one who regards me with dislike."

"You won't be troubled with seeing him, so where's the difference?" rejoined Mrs. Wilson as gruffly as be-

fore. "He told me just now that he's going to New York, and may be away three or four weeks,"

Grace reluctantly concluded to refrain from writing. She did not wish to show disrespect to her quondam guardian by rejecting his arrangement: but on the other hand she knew that her stepfather would take no interest in her future movements, and she would greatly prefer to act at once rather than remain in a state of suspense and uncertainty. She felt pained, too, by the housekeepers altered demeanor, for the worthy woman had been too highly exasperated on learning all that had transpired, to conceal her dissatisfaction. But now as she gazed on the troubled countenance of the young girl her native goodness of heart regained its ascendancy, and with a sight that seemed to express the inutility of bearing malice, she resumed in a kinder tone.

"Well, well, my dear, this is only the beginning of your troubles. Whether you go or stay rests entirely with yourself, but whichever you do you'll never be as gay and light-hearted as you used to be."

Grace turned a grateful look on the relenting dame, throwing her arms around her exclaimed, "Dear mother Wilson! I am so glad that you do not intend to remain angry with me."

"What's the use! When a thing's done it is done, and there is no good in fretting about it that I can see."

I knew from the very start that you'd get into trouble, but— isn't that the sound of wheels? yes, 'tis."

And she rushed to the window followed by Grace in time to see Mr. Althorpe enter his carriage. Sterner, gloomier than ever was his countenance. As the vehicle passed slowly over the little bridge he leaned forward and cast a lingering glance towards the mansion. Did any dark presentiment at that moment cross his mind that he was taking his last look at the home "which would know him no more forever?"

CHAPTER XIV.

Changes.

"The one remains, the many change and pass,
Heaven's light for ever shines, earth's shadows fly,
Life, like a dome of many-colored glass,
Stains the white radiance of eternity,
Until death tramples it to fragments."

Grace was busy in the garden weeding and tying up her favorite plants, thinking somewhat dolefully the while that they would soon miss her loving care, and wondering where she would be when the roses of another June bloomed around Oakdale; when her name was uttered by a familiar voice, and looking up hastily she beheld Angela Althorpe at her side. Warm was the greeting between the two friends, but a sudden thought checked Grace in her eager expressions of delight, and she glanced furtively towards the library, forgetting for the moment that its usual occupant was absent, and almost expecting to see him come forth and order the intruder away. Angela did not notice this. Her eyes were dwelling on the fair scene now radiant with the bright beauty of early summer, and a sigh escaped her as she murmured.

"Poor grandfather! How he must have loved this old place!"

The words and the tone struck Grace with a chill foreboding,

"Something has happened!" she exclaimed, seizing Angela's hand, "Tell me!"

Angela replied by unfolding a newspaper, which the village lawyer had sent by Willie to her mother, and there in staring capitals was the account of "a dreadful steamboat accident on the Hudson"—with lists of the lost and rescued. Among the former was the name of Gerald Althorpe.

In solemn silence the two girls read the harrowing account of a catastrophe by which more than a hundred human beings had been hurled into eternity, without even a moment's time to prepare for the dread judgment awaiting them. This was the first thought of Grace as she turned with a shudder to her companion, and it formed an echo in her mournful exclamation.

"Isn't it terrible? Mother always hoped that grandfather would be converted before his death, and O! how often and fervently did we all pray for him. It was almost the last request of *our dear father* that we would do so,—but alas!"

Tears, springing from such holy feelings of forgiving charity as angels might feel, bedewed Angela's cheeks, and Grace wept silently with her. Wept for the departed of whose kindness memory recalled so many instances; wept still more sadly over the painful remem-

brance of their last interview. Ah! if she could but live over that hour again, how different would she act?—how carefully would she control every emotion of resentment, and strive to win him to better feelings by unwearied gentleness and forbearance. But the past was irrevocable, she could only derive from it a salutary lesson for the future.

And he was gone—the stern, iron-willed master of Oakdale! It seemed impossible that he would no more appear in his wonted place; that he who had borne himself so loftily, scornfully defying the justice and abusing the mercy of the Most High, had been snatched away from the scenes of earth, that his remains were resting unmarked and unhonored beneath the bright waves that sparkled as gaily as if they formed not the winding sheet of many whose sad fate had shrouded happy households in gloom. But even as he had shut out the light of loving kindred from his life, so his death wrung no mourner's heart with agony. There was no gentle pity for his awful doom, and the veil of charity was drawn over his faults and errors; but there were none to feel that his death made a void in their own existence; none to cherish his memory with fond, regretful tenderness. His housekeeper's grief was the deepest felt for him; she had known him in his better days, when the selfishness and obstinacy that were destined to embitter his own life as well as that of

others, were as yet undeveloped; she could recall pleasant reminiscences of him as a husband, father, and friend—how strange they seemed to the two girls who listened to her with eager attention. Yet even she, while striving like them to forget the painful memories connected with later years, naturally ceased to mourn for his death, while speculating curiously as to the changes it would bring. Knowing that he had destroyed his will, she was able to indulge a hope which every hour, grew stronger that things were coming right at last, and this was no slight consolation.

Grace was not so sanguine. She thought it far more likely that another will had been made, excluding all the offending parties from any share in the inheritance, and she shook her head and smiled thoughtfully when Angela, who, by her mother's desire remained at Oakdale as company for her friend, expressed her views on the important subject. For Angela, having long since felt assured that her grandfather's wards would be his heirs, and knowing nothing about the destruction of the will, (Grace had not deemed it proper to speak of this to any one but the housekeeper), was delighted that Grace, whom she loved so dearly, would benefit by the wealth, which otherwise would probably have been bequeathed to some public institution. Grace tried to discourage such hopes, knowing well that they would be disappointed, but Angela would not be infected by her fears.

Nor would Alfred, who on hearing of his guardian's death, had obtained permission from the president of the college to make a brief visit to his home. Alfred entered Oakdale as its master. He was quite certain that on the opening of the will he would prove to be the heir, and not all his sister's warnings could bring him to regard the matter as even doubtful. His only fear was that the methodical old guardian had "tied up the estate" in such a way that he could not make "the dash" he was meditating. Perhaps he would be obliged to remain at college, and at this dismal prospect Master Alfred disfigured his handsome features with a hideous grimace. He had learning enough, he told his sister, for a fellow who would not have to earn his living by his brains; and he was seventeen now, quite old enough to see something of the world, to begin to enjoy life. There was his classmate, Tom. Elwood, nearly four months younger than he, was about to leave school, and spend three or four years in foreign travel. He would start in the fall, his father was already looking up a tutor to go with him; and Alfred had made up his mind "coming along" that if he was at liberty to follow his inclinations he would make one of the traveling party; Tom had often wished they could go together, they would have such a jolly time, and the boy sprang to his feet with a shout that was almost a yell at the thought that such enjoyment *might* be within his reach.

But all his plans and expectations were dashed by the arrival of a legal gentleman representing the firm which had transacted the affairs of the deceased for nearly half a century. Mr. F. had been early made acquainted with his client's adoption of the orphan wards as his heirs ; had drawn up the solemn document constituting them such ; and had promised Mr. Althorpe that, as one of the executors, he would repair immediately to Oakdale "in the event of anything occurring," and see that his wishes were fully carried out, the most important of said wishes being that neither Mrs. Althorpe nor her children should attend the funeral, nor under any pretence obtain entrance into the house ! In accordance with this solemn promise, Mr. F. deemed it his duty to come to Oakdale, though his "instructions" were not applicable in the new state of affairs. How varied were the emotions with which he was listened to by the little group, consisting only of the brother and sister, Angela, and the housekeeper, whom to Alfred's annoyance, the young ladies had insisted on inviting to the library. He informed them that his respected client had called upon him on his way to New York, on the day following his last departure from Oakdale, stating that he had changed his intentions as to the dispositions of his property, that he had destroyed the will made two years previously, and wished a new one drawn up without delay. On further discussion

of the subject however, he had seemed undecided whether to devote his estate to the founding of a library, or to divide it among several charitable institutions, of which he had long been a liberal patron, and had finally concluded to let the matter rest until his return from New York.

So he had died intestate, and those whom he had so long persecuted were the lawful inheritors of the wealth which had been productive of so little happiness to him. Grace rejoiced that her fears had not been realized ; Angela's first feeling of disappointment on her friend's account quickly gave place to joy ; Mrs. Wilson was hysterical, "quite beside herself," as she acknowledged at the turn things had taken. But poor Alfred was inconsolable. After all his expectations to be thus cheated out of what he for three years past firmly believed to be his own. He conceived a violent aversion to the Althorpes, which, with boyish disregard of etiquette, he made sufficiently manifest to Angela, the only one of "the hateful set," whom he had a chance to see. Grace was quite ashamed of his rudeness, which to Angela seemed almost ludicrous and very excusable under the peculiar circumstances. But he soon returned to college, his dreams of a merry time, with plenty of money to spend, cruelly ended.

Grace could not but feel that he had escaped a great danger ; that to one of his disposition, wealth would

have proved a snare rather than a blessing, and this conviction comforted her much for having been the innocent cause of his disappointment. It was true that poverty also had its dangers, and the sister, whose loving heart clung to this dear and only relative, and would have had his future bright with every blessing, and rich with honor and usefulness, was sadly fearful that his volatile, pleasure-loving temperament would lead him astray. How often she had longed to see him during the past two years, but his visit had only confirmed the misgivings to which his occasional letters had given rise. It was but too evident that he was trying to make the most of his time not for study but for fun—"that his chosen companions were among the wildest, jolliest larks"—that his highest aspirations tended only to the gay time he would have on being finally emancipated from the restraints, slight as they seemed to be, of college life. To the thoughtful mind the future of such a youth was anything but promising. Under the most favorable auspices it could scarcely prove satisfactory, but this poor boy, with no guiding hand to lead him right, no one having authority to control his waywardness, no religious principles to impart strength against temptations, how should he escape "the quicksands and the snares" through which his path might lead?

Grace was too keenly interested in the subject to

turn from it at will, but she could do nothing save to pour forth her soul in fervent prayer that he might be guided by One mighty to save,—that a ray of divine light might illumine his soul even as it had hers. She "asked with faith, nothing doubting," and her anxieties were calmed by an abiding trust that sooner or later, "in God's good time," her prayers would be answered.

It was a glad day at Oakdale when Mrs. Althorpe once more entered it as mistress, exchanging a life of toil, penury and care, for one of ease and plenty. The housekeeper in her wild delight embraced Grace again and again, protesting that she quite forgave the folly which had led to this blessed result; and she could never sufficiently express her gratification, at the lucky chance which had befallen her favorites. But they saw not in this unlooked-for change the blind workings of chance. With grateful hearts they recognized the mysterious ways of an overruling Providence; and entered on their new career with the same virtuous sentiments, the same humility and fervid piety which had characterized them in a lowlier sphere. Prosperity could not work evil to her, who during long years of trial had remained faithful to her God, prepared to receive alike good or evil at His fatherly hands; nor was it likely to prove injurious to those young minds who had been carefully trained to virtue from the first dawning of

reason. The days of trial and of hardship were passed; life now presented to them only its "sunny side," and there was no cloud to dim the brightness of the fair picture. No cloud? Yes, there was one, for when was ever a lot so blissful as to *fully* satisfy the human heart? what life, however happy in the present, or alluring in the future, into which steals not some sad memory to chasten its otherwise perfect blessedness?

"It might have been" is still the burden of the song. And thus while entering on the possession of affluence they could not forget that it came too late to benefit those whose memory was sacredly cherished—could not choose but contrast the brightness of their present lot with the anxious cares, the want of many little comforts, which those loved ones had experienced even to their last days on earth, and think sorrowfully, "they might still be with us had all this come long ago." But faith stilled the rising murmurs of yearning tenderness, as she whispered of that "inheritance which passeth not away," that had been won by the light sufferings of a few fleeting years.

One of the first cares of Mrs. Althorpe was to attend to the bestowal of the bequests which Grace could call to mind. Of these the one to the housekeeper, which was in the form of a small annuity, was the most important; but she sturdily refusing to have anything to do with it, "seeing that she was settled for life at

the old place and had no earthly use of money," it was settled on her granddaughter, Hannah.

Mrs. Althorpe next consulted Grace on certain plans she had formed in regard to Alfred, for whom it was her intention to provide as liberally as her portion of the estate would allow. With the delicacy of true kindness, she wished if it were possible to manage so that the youth would feel no oppressive sense of obligation; and she had doubts whether it would be best to inform him of this provision, or to leave him in ignorance of it for a time.

Grace would have advised the latter course, hoping that it would arouse her ambition and develop his energies, but for a letter received soon after his return to college, written in a style of gloomy dejectedness, and vaguely hinting at the possibility of his being driven to do something desperate. "He could not remain where every one knew of his altered fortunes and looked down upon him in consequence; he would go somewhere, he knew not where—do something, he cared not what; he only knew that he had been shamefully treated and made a laughing stock; he would not stand it,"—and so on in a strain that awakened Grace's liveliest apprehensions. Mrs. Althorpe, on reading the letter, participated in her uneasiness; and the consequence was that in a very few days Master Alfred received the comforting assurance that

his situation was not as appalling as he had thought, that on finishing his collegiate course he would have ample means to start in any business or profession he might select, which pleasant intelligence was interspersed with many sisterly entreaties to strive by close application to his studies to make up for lost time, &c. Which "moral reflections" the youth "skipped" and gave undivided attention to the more palatable portion of the epistle.

To be sure, the prospect held out was meagre enough in comparison with his former one; still it was something. If he could not boast of being the heir to a fine old estate, he could let those who had begun to look down upon him know that in the final settlement rendered necessary by the sudden appearance of persons who were nearer akin to "uncle Althorpe," he had been awarded his share of the property. He need not say how much or rather how little it amounted to. With this salve to his wounded pride he quickly recovered his former spirits, and, only delaying long enough to give some hints of the new state of affairs to one who would be sure to repeat them with numerous embellishments to the other collegians, he set about writing to his sister the longest, most affectionate letter she had ever received from him, and entirely satisfactory to her save a postscript referring to Mrs. Althorpe. That lady need not have puzzled herself to

devise a method of helping the youth without wounding his sensitiveness. He considered all that she could do as very little towards indemnifying him for the immense loss he conceived himself to have suffered through her and her family; for he persisted in believing that only for them he would have been the heir, and thought it was a condescension on his part to receive anything at her hands.

Relieved from her anxiety on Alfred's account, Grace had leisure to think of her own position, and she astonished Mrs. Althorpe by announcing her intention of leaving Oakdale to enter on the vocation of school teacher. Mrs. Althorpe was not only surprised but grieved, and a little hurt.

"I cannot understand your reluctance to remain with us, Grace," she said in one of their frequent conversations on the subject. "If matters were reversed, if the original intention had been adhered to, I know well that you would have insisted on sharing your good fortune with me and mine. Why cannot you allow me the same privilege?"

"In that case, dear madam," replied Grace, "I should only be restoring to you a part of what was justly your own."

"Not so, my dear, since the one to whom it belonged preferred to give it to you."

"But that was under different circumstances," said Grace, laughing. "You know that latterly he would

have been far from leaving me a legacy, for he had often declared that he would rather commit all he possessed to the flames than have any Romanist benefitted one copper by it. And think how determined he was on this point, since he withdrew his favor from Alfred merely through a fear that he might sometime follow my example, or that he would naturally make me a partaker in his good fortune. No, no, I should not like to disregard the old gentleman's wishes in a matter which was of vital importance in his estimation."

"Is not that objection as applicable to us as to you?" said Mrs. Althorpe. "Our offence is the same, my dear girl."

"Not at all, for you have a clear, indisputable right to inherit all he left; the case is widely different with one who had no claim on him of kindred, nor even, latterly, of friendship."

Mrs. Althorpe, loth to part with Grace, next proposed that she should remain at Oakdale as governess to Jennie, thus satisfying her desire for independence and useful occupation. But Grace could not assent to a proposal which she knew was dictated only by kindness to her, as Mrs. Althorpe had previously expressed her intention of sending Jennie to the convent where she herself had been educated. Beside, she was actuated by a more powerful motive than even those she had assigned to her kind friend—the desire of

pleasing her brother who had announced his firm purpose of never again setting his foot upon the grounds of Oakdale, and with characteristic selfishness was displeased at his sister for keeping on friendly terms with those who had injured him. In another year he would be leaving college, and she wished by that time to be settled in some place where he could visit her. Perhaps he would be more steady then, and they could have a pleasant little home together, she adding to the moderate income he would have, by teaching, while he prepared himself for the legal profession which he had mentioned as his choice. Her castles in the air were not very lofty ones—how different from those she had formerly delighted in building; but they were inexpressibly pleasant to one who hoped that she would thus be enabled to promote both the temporal and eternal interests of the brother so fondly loved.

In furtherance of her plan she intended to make a visit to Mrs. Johnson, her pleasant acquaintance of the previous summer, who, in the course of their long chats, had often lamented how tried the folks in her neighborhood were for want of good teachers. Grace had been much amused by her description of the various teachers who had "undertaken" the principal school in the town, (city, Mrs. Johnson called it), with their prosperous beginnings and luckless endings. But when first the necessity arose of considering the most feasible method of earning a livelihood, the re-

membrance of the old lady's yarns, had suggested a plan which she was still resolved on trying.

The housekeeper lifted her hands in speechless horror when made acquainted with this plan ; as soon as she regained the use of her tongue she scolded Grace vehemently for "such folly, the like of which was never known before. Just when everything had come out fair and square, to have a new bother turn up ! But what else could be expected ? For her part she believed that when people turned Catholic they lost every bit of common sense they had. O she had seen crazy doings before now, but this went ahead of all. Such a ridiculous girl ! 'Twasn't enough to lose a husband—and such a one as Mr. Clifton would have been—'twasn't enough to get herself disinherited, but now, to crown all, she must go off dear knows where, to be a school teacher. Dear—dear—how could any one have patience with such conduct ?"

And when Grace reminded her that it was the previous "folly" that had helped "to bring things right," and would have comforted her with the expectation of some other wonderful good arising from her present folly, she sorrowfully rejected the consolation, and persisted in prophesying that Miss Gracie would get sick enough of her caper before she was a year older.

CHAPTER XV.

New Scenes.

"O Time, O life, ye were not made
For languid dreaming in the shade,
Nor sinful hearts to moor all day
By lilly isle or grassy bay,
Nor drink at noontide's balmy hours
Sweet opiates from the meadow flowers."

Grace found her two days' journey to W——, remarkably pleasant. During the first part of it which was by railroad, she had the companionship of Mrs. Althorpe and Angela, and though her spirits were depressed by the final parting with those true friends, the enchanting scenery through which she was now leisurely travelling by the stage, soon won her whole attention to its charms. Her route lay through one of the most picturesque regions of the Highlands of western Pennsylvania, amid river and mountain scenery which, if it were in Europe, would have its every nook and corner explored and copied by enthusiastic tourists and artists, and celebrated in the loftiest strains of the muse. The silvery Susquehanna skirted the way, its bright waters flashing and sparkling beneath the soft rich sunshine of a September sky. In the distance the Blue Mountains towered proudly, their bold out-

lines seeming to melt into the fleecy clouds—the glorious mountains ever beautiful—whether clothed in the gorgeous purple and gold of the sun's earliest rays, reposing in solemn grandeur beneath his noontide effulgence, or growing dark and near in the soft light of "the gloaming." In the foreground stretched hilly ranges, broken into a thousand picturesque forms, here pushing boldly towards the river, and there falling back with a sudden sweep that brought into full view some pleasant feature, softening the rugged grandeur of the fir-crowned heights ; sometimes a long stretch of smooth meadow land, studded with noble trees, and veined with tiny streamlets ; now a broken hollow chocked up with hemlocks and pines, with here and there a mountain ash throwing out its great clusters of red berries ; further on the old Pennsylvania farm house, looking wofully insignificant spite of its heavy porticoed door and multitude of windows—in comparison with the lofty, commodious barn, brilliant with whitewash, and suggestive of great flocks and herds, and ample stores of the fruits of the earth.

The stage-coach rattled swiftly along the main street of W——, drawing up with the customary flourish at the tavern, where Grace was received by the landlord, with the bustling, make yourself-at-home air of an inn-keeper of the olden time, and handed over to the care of his wife, a buxom dame whose evident good

nature and desire to please, made amends for all deficiencies in the way of refinement. Our young traveller, naturally a little nervous on this her first experiment in travelling alone, was put at ease in a moment, and finding that Mrs. Johnson lived "just a little piece down the road," she quickly changed her travelling costume for a cool muslin dress, and set off under the guidance of one of the children.

The homestead exactly realized Grace's expectations ; it was just such a comfortable, old fashioned place as one might expect Mrs. Johnson to own. An old two-story stone building, with a porched roof on the front and each side, all overrun with trumpet-flower vines, with long straggling branches shooting out in every direction, covered with scarlet flowers, rich and gay, looking however coarse. At the back of the house was a rude trellis work, gay with scarlet beams and pink morning glories. A picket fence, old and much worn ; but looking all the better, Grace thought, for that, separated the dwelling from the highway, and the narrow strip of ground between was thickly covered with long grass, coarse, but of a beautiful green, with a few old-fashioned roses straggling and unpruned, spreading along the fence and creeping about the steps of the porch. There was a motley collection of out-buildings, barns and sheds, and wagon house, and wood house and poultry house, all scattered about with

a view to convenient access rather than to the embellishment of the landscape. The barn yard abounded with feathered broods; strutting turkeys, respectable, old-fashioned chickens, one of which could put to flight half a dozen gawky Shanghais, and waddling ducks for whose accommodation a most tempting mud-puddle was within convenient reach. Fruit trees old and gnarled, handsome as hanging gardens in the time of blossom, now weighed down by their ripening treasures, abounded on every side; broad acres telling their own story of thrifty cultivation spread all around; the whole place had an air of substantial comfort and abundance.

As she passed the large yard Grace checked the rapid footsteps of her little companion to observe unnoticed the good dame whom she could see, fat, rosy and cheery-looking as ever, busily dealing out the evening meal to her feathered dependants, and taking a world of pains to deal equal justice to the whole tribe; 'shooing' off the rapacious ones that would fain have monopolized the whole, softly calling the "skeery" pullets and ducklings which 'could not stand up for their own', but crowded fearlessly around her secure from the assaults of the "bullies" whom she rated soundly on their greediness.

She greeted her unexpected visitor with loud expressions of joy, and hurried her into the best room, pouring out a multitude of eager questions and excla-

mations, which Grace answered by smiles, for as to getting an opportunity of replying in words, that was quite out of the question.

"Law me! if I wasn't talking of you this very morning," she went on; "telling Josh—you remember me speaking of my Joshuway, I guess?"—about that frolic we had on the mountain purty nigh a year ago. Not but I told him all about it many a time before, and he says to me this morning looking jist as grave as an owl, 'Mother if you keep telling me about that there adventure I'll have it all by heart before long.' "He's a provoking creature, that Josh, and you'd think him right down serious, when he's jist as full of fun and mischief as a colt. So says I, "a good thing can't be told too often, Josh, and I must talk of that young lady whenever I think of her, and that's purty often, I'll allow." "Yes," says Josh, "and she must be something uncommon, for she's the very first young lady I ever heard you praisin' long's I can remember, mother." "That's true enough" says I, "and do you want to know the reason?—it's because she's "the very first" real young lady I ever come across; the rest were only make believe, with their grand ways and hifalutin' airs." "There now, Gracie; you needn't blush up so, for it's jist the truth, but law! you only look the purtier the more you blush, so there's no harm done."

All this time the good lady was bustling about,

opening some windows "to let in the air," and shutting others "to keep out the sun," helping Grace to "lay off" her things," getting her a fan, and insisting that she must make herself comfortable; a thing which was already done without any effort on her part, as Grace assured her, for who would not feel comfortable on finding themselves so heartily welcomed and enthroned in the easiest of rocking-chairs in "the coolest and pleasantest of rooms?"

The shrill voice of Grace's young guide now broke in. "I say, Miss Johnson, is that there lady going to stay here? 'Cause I'm going home if I don't have to wait to take her back."

"I'd like to catch you taking her, Benny; jist wait a minute."

And then followed a dozen rapid questions as to how Grace came, whether she stopped at the tavern, who was with her, how long "they" were going to stay, and if she couldn't let "them" go on, without her, and come to stay a good long while at the homestead.

Grace replied that she had arrived in the afternoon stage, and left her baggage at the tavern. "I travelled by myself," she added, her voice faltering; "dear Mrs. Johnson, I have a long story to tell you."

"To be sure, and I want to hear it of all things. But what possessed you to stop at the tavern? the driver would a brought you right to the door. But I

declare I shan't say no more to you till you get something to eat. What's that?—trouble! I'm ashamed to hear you say sich a thing. Come along, Benny, I'll give you a cake, and then run along and tell your father to send the lady's baggage right over. Or no—tell your mother to please keep it safe 'till I send for it after supper; yes, that'll be best." And Mrs. Johnson hurried away "on hospitable thoughts intent."

Returning after a time, she drew the old-fashioned work-stand that ornamented one corner to the window by which Grace sat, saying, "I'm going to have our supper here all to ourselves. It's a little early for it, to be sure, but we'll have all the more time to set over it and talk, and that's what I like."

"So do I," said Grace. "Don't you remember that we used to be the last to leave the table at the Springs?"

"That I do; I recollect everything that happened there; you can't believe how I missed it all when I come home." Here she was interrupted by the entrance of the housemaid bearing a well supplied tea tray. "Jest set it down here, 'Liza, and we'll find a place for some of the things on the window-seat. There, that will do. Now, Gracie, set right to; you must be most starved, I know."

"Is that the reason why you have provided dainties enough for half a dozen people?" asked Grace, laughing.

The gratified hostess cast a glance of affected disparagement over the bountiful repast; the hot biscuits light and flaky as pie-crust, the nicely browned ham with its cream gravy, the golden butter, the snowy smear-case smothered in cream, the crisp pickles, the rich preserves and spiced gingerbread.

"I'd have had fried chicken if there was time enough," she said as she handed Grace her cup of tempting coffee, "but I know when a body is tired and hungry after a journey, they'd rather take the first thing that comes to hand than be kept waiting. Now we'll take our time and enjoy ourselves."

And enjoy themselves they undoubtedly did, lingering over the palatable repast and chatting with the ease and cordiality of old friends, until the slanting sunbeams warned Mrs. Johnson that her presence was needed in another direction.

"I declare if milking time isn't most over," she cried, starting up briskly and inviting Grace to accompany her. "And there's one of them creturs won't let a soul come nigh to her but me. I've given her the way of it, you see, and she looks to me to milk her as regular as the day. Yes there she is," pointing to one of the fine fat animals that stood apart from the rest awaiting patiently for her mistress.

In the barn yard they found Josh, a young man of Herculean proportions, sufficiently resembling his

mother to have a claim to the appellation of good looking, and being like her also, Grace judged, in good temper and volubility, though at present his tongue forgot its office, and he stood in awkward silence before the beautiful and tastily dressed young lady who had made so sudden a descent upon his home, while in his embarrassment he held the little white hand she had placed in his, with as tight a "grip" as if he was holding in a refractory horse. His mother having performed the important ceremony of introduction, turned her attention to her favorite, which was claiming her notice by a plaintive *moo*. The young people smilingly watched her as she fed "Sukey" with biscuits brought from the supper table, patting her glossy neck and drawing back with a "so, so," until the gentle creature and the milking stool were fixed in the position she fancied, when two pearly streams were milked vigorously into the shining pail; while all the time she dilated on the affectionateness of the pet, that was so meek and quiet with *her* as all could see, but had to be tied, "both horns and hoofs before she'd let down her milk to anybody else."

"Mother thinks there never was such a cōw," said Josh, making a bold effort to be agreeable.

"And Sukey evidently thinks there never was such a mistress—an intelligent animal that!" rejoined Grace, tripping after Mrs. Johnson to the dairy-house, which

was her special pride, and the labors of which were always performed by herself—"she'd like to see herself trust her butter-making to hired help, 'less it was in a case of necessity."

The dairy was refreshing just to look at. Its thick stone walls, as white inside and out as lime could make them, and the two grateful willows that overshadowed it, kept it of a delicious coolness, the spring flowed through with a soothing murmur, and from the snowy shelves the pans of rich milk and balls of golden butter gleamed out temptingly in the half darkness. Grace assisted in straining the new milk and skimming all that was ready for that process; after which she had to be shown the garden with its borders thickly set with all the favorite plants of a country housewife, great clumps of marigolds and prince's feathers being especially abundant and forming a rich contrast; while, as if ground was scarce, the centre was appropriated to the useful in the shape of beets, cabbages, and parsnips. Grace could not suppress a smile as in contrast with this garden so complacently exhibited, arose a vision of the lawn and green-house, the flower garden and kitchen garden of Oakdale. But the scene was not without some claim to beauty now, when the setting sun was scattering gold among the delicate parsnip tops, and brightening up the red-veined beet leaves and huge cabbage heads with wide bars of

light, and Grace, to whom the humblest of nature's productions had a charm, gratified her simple-minded hostess by duly admiring each in turn.

And then she had to relate the various events which had lately occurred, the consequent change in her circumstances, and the project which now occupied her mind; Mrs. Johnson listening the while with deep interest, and giving her at times a motherly *hug* intended to express both sympathy and encouragement. At the close she gave full scope to the different feelings the narration had excited, and set about thinking "how this thing of getting a school could be managed."

"There's the semernary in W.," she began thoughtfully. "Now, if you could get to be principal of that, 'twould be jist the thing; but as ill-luck would have it, they've got one already, and I don't really believe there's a teacher wanting in any school about here, 'less it may be in the village a couple of miles further on. Who's this was telling me that it seemed like they were never to get a teacher there any more?—O, I recollect. 'Twas last Sabbath when I was talking before meeting to Mrs. Boyd—she's a committee-man's wife, and she says they're jist plagued half to death about it."

"Then perhaps I could obtain the situation," said Grace, her hopes, dashed by the first words, reviving again.

"Easy enough; but 'tisn't the sort of place you'd like, or that I'd like for you," and Mrs. Johnson shook her head mysteriously. "Any way, there's no hurry, you couldn't go jest yet, for I want you to stay with me for a spell, and something better'll be turning up."

Grace warmly expressed her sense of this kindness, but represented her earnest desire to procure an engagement as soon as possible, as she would feel unsettled till then. Mrs. Johnson assented though with reluctance to this.

"And another thing, the business will be new to you, so that it may be as well to take a poor sort of school first, jist to get your hand in as I may say. So we'll go over to Mrs. Boyd's right early to-morrow if you like—it's only a pleasant walk by going across the fields, and then you can see for yourself how you like the place."

Thus it was settled, but they were spared the trouble, for breakfast was scarcely over when Mrs. Boyd made her appearance. She had probably heard of the new arrival, and having an inquiring mind had improvised an errand to Mrs. Johnson for the purpose of obtaining information. Recollecting that this was the wife of one of the school committee, Grace observed her with some interest, as she sat opposite to Mrs. Johnson, to whom she formed as perfect a contrast in every respect as could be imagined. Her bony, angular

figure and the stiffness with which she bore herself made her look much taller than she really was, her features were passable enough, but there was a hardness in her expression, in the gleam of her small keen eyes, and in the unvaried ring of her voice that sufficiently indicated her general character. There was no feminine softness about Mrs. Boyd, no "shilly-shallying weakness," as she was wont to term it. There were two classes of persons whom she held in utter contempt—those who were always ailing, and those who were always down in the world; "the last mite of spirit," in her opinion, would enable either set of miserable creatures to shake off their woes and be like other people.

Grace, not coming under either head, escaped censure, though her fair complexion and soft hands occasioned a whispered lamentation over "them that were brought up in fine lady idleness;" but this here one wasn't to be blamed—'twarnt' *her* fault, poor thing, she was willin' to arn her bread, and that showed she was good for somethin'. Mrs. Boyd was "willin' to help sich sort of folks along." So she proposed that Grace should come over to her house the next day but one—"to-morrow, her husband, who was on the committee, would be too busy for 'xaminin'—but *she'd* git him to do it the next afternoon." She spoke as if the examination was a great favor which her influence would obtain,

and Grace wondered at the assumption of importance, not yet aware that in such a community for a man to be on a committee, or hold any public place, however humble, was no trifling dignity in the estimation of his "better half." And Mrs. Boyd, in addition to this, had a hereditary claim to distinction, for "the half brother of her father" had been a justice of the peace in his day, as she took occasion to mention more than once during her visit. Mrs. Johnson was "somewhat nettled" as she admitted, by her neighbor's manner.

"I declare, Joshuway, if you could hear how she went on about getting the committee to do this and that, you'd think *she* was the biggest man of them all."

This was at the supper table where the three were comfortably settled, for Mrs. Johnson would by no means set Grace down at the common table, and though Josh could not often absent himself from it without causing grumbling "among the hands," she thought he might easily do so at the evening repast; and so half coaxing, half laughing the young farmer out of his bashfulness, she got him to the table; and presently feeling as much at ease with the guest as if she had been an old acquaintance, he was ready to do his full share of the talking.

"Why didn't you shut her up by telling her that like as not Miss Morton wouldn't have the school when she come to look at it, as she's very particular what

sort of one she goes to? I'd bring her down a notch or two if I was by," was his reply to the remark about Mrs. Boyd.

"Law if I'd only had the sense to think of it," returned his mother regretfully. "But I ain't up to all the turns and twists of talk people have now-a-days. In my time we were plain, up and down, straightforward folks. But times will change, I suppose, and people too."

Josh, busy with a new train of thought, broke in on her moralizing. "What did you ask her about that school for, anyhow, mother?"

"Why, Josh, Grace here wants to get to teach school, and that was all the chance I could think of."

"And you call that a chance." The young farmer's eyes were fixed on the graceful figure and lovely countenance before him, as if contrasting them with 'the surroundings of the office to which she aspired.' Well, mother, I wouldn't have believed it of you. *Her* going to that village to teach school—just as well put a canary bird in the sty with the hogs."

Grace laughed gaily at his vehemence. "I don't know whether I ought to thank you for that pretty compliment, Mr. Johnson, since it is paid to me at the expense of your neighbors."

"Thankee—I don't count Springland folks my neighbors." This was said with a growl that set his

mother and Grace to laughing immoderately. But seeing that the laughter annoyed him, the latter soon checked herself, and merrily begged to be forgiven for her enormous mistake—declaring however, that as the Springland folks were likely to be *her* neighbors, she was sorry to find that they bore so unenviable a reputation.

“They’re about the meanest set you could find this side of Botany Bay,” resumed Josh; “and as for ill-nature I’d back them against the world. They’ll eat the flesh off your bones, as the saying is—what you do and what you don’t do—where you go and where you don’t go—what you said and what you didn’t say—you’ll hear it talked over till you won’t hardly know yourself how much of it is true and how much false.”

“But suppose I don’t trouble myself about this gossip.”

“And ’tisn’t only that,” Josh went on, too intent on his subject to heed the interruption; “some folks are good enough even if they are given to tattling—but for them—there is not one so far as I know that *you’d* like to make acquaintance with,” concluded Josh, bringing down his hand on the table to give force to his deliberate opinion.

“Why, Josh, how you talk!” said his mother reprovingly.

“Well, mother, if you know of one just let’s have the name and I’ll give up. ’Tisn’t Sal Hedgewood, I reckon, that’s never satisfied only when she is giving somebody ‘a piece of her mind—’ a sweet mind it must be, judging by the pieces. And Hannah Joyce, she’s a beauty, isn’t she? Forever tramping about the fields with her husband’s boots on, and his great-coat buttoned over her shoulders in bad weather, ordering the men about till the best-natured of them would like to give her a ducking in the pond. Then there’s that quarrelsome old Mrs. Ford, she always puts me in mind of the porcupine we used to read about at school with its quills sticking out.”

“Poor old cretur, I never found her so quarrelsome,” put in Mrs. Johnson.

“Because you don’t have much to do with her. The porcupine’s quills won’t stick you either, if you keep away from him, but that’s no thanks to him. And there’s Nance Carver, that has about as much sense as a pumpkin seed, turning up her nose at everybody because she went a year to school in Philadelphia, though if she’s a specimen of their teaching, I wouldn’t give a turnip for it. And that hateful Bets Brooks, the most meddlesome, mischief making old hag.”

“There, I was wondering if *she* wouldn’t come up?” interrupted his mother. “You see, Gracie, Joshuway’s got a spite agin old Bets, for she tried to make mischief.

betwixt him and Sallie Blake, a real purty gal that he's rather sweet upon, you know, so you musn't believe half what he says about her, nor about the rest, for that matter. Jist you let the one half of his talk go for what it's worth."

"I think even the other half is sufficiently discouraging," laughed Grace. "But I own to some curiosity regarding the male members of this charming community—they are all saints probably," with a glance of sly malice at Josh.

"There you're out; if they were I'd like to know what business they'd have in Springland," said Josh returning her glance. "The men are no better than the women, only they won't give you so much trouble. About one half of them spend most of their time lounging round the taverns, and the others—well, Dick Joice don't drink, but he goes lazying about hunting after news, while his wife's man and master at home—as for *mistress* the old tumbling down hole hasn't any. And old Hedgewood would sell the victuals off his table, if any body would offer money for them, and let his family go hungry to bed. And Luke Carver is a smartish young chap enough, only he's such a fool he thinks every gal that looks at him must fall in love with him *sure*."

"Yes, he fancied Sally Blake did," broke in the mother with a wink at Grace.

"And Eben Carver—that's his father."

"Now, Josh, Brother Carver's a member of Church, ('So are they all nearly,' muttered Josh,) and I can't hear him run down. He's a real good man and gives a great deal of his time to the Lord's service, I'm afraid you'll never be like him, Joshuway."

"I hope not, mother," returned the incorrigible Josh. "If he gives so much of his time to the Lord, just tell me who he gives the rest of it to, when he is cheating his neighbors, passing off the meanest sort of store goods on them for the best, and giving short weight and measure at that."

Mrs. Johnson looked troubled, but evaded giving the answer for which her son triumphantly waited. "I won't have you running down the folks so; what d'ye think the minister would say if he heard you."

"Say I told the truth so far's it went, and that I could add plenty more without belying them. He doesn't excuse them because they're members, you know that, mother. He gives them some hard rubs sometimes. I often go to hear him preach just for that," he added looking at Grace. "I like to watch the hard cases when he says things that suit them to a T., and think to himself, 'Ha, my good fellow, how do you like that?'—I never find that the preaching does them any good, though."

"Perhaps they are all too busy in applying what he

says to their neighbors to take his lessons home to themselves."

"Ha! ha! you've caught it now, Mister Josh Johnson," cried his mother in glee, while he with a good humored laugh told Grace "that wasn't fair, but he'd be even with her some day," and went off to attend to his share of the closing labors of the day.

Grace was not frightened from her purpose as he had hoped; she felt sure that a wish to have something to say had led to unconscious exaggeration. At the appointed time she appeared before the committee, went through the examination with an ease that astonished them, and then accompanied Mrs. Johnson to the house of Mrs. Boyd, where they had promised to spend the afternoon. Mr. Boyd kindly calling after her from the school-house not to worry about her certificate, for he would fetch it when he came home to supper. She thanked him properly, her eyes sparkling with suppressed merriment at the thought of the difficulty the learned committee would probably have in drawing up that important document.

Mrs. Boyd's house was as unpromising as the lady herself. It was like a large square box pierced with small window and doorways, without porch or projecting eaves to break its stiff outlines. There was not a tree, nor a flower, nor even a weed about the inclosure, "sich things only made a litter," and Mrs.

Boyd prided herself on the perfect neatness of her premises. Everything was indeed in the primmest order, but bald and cheerless. In the yard were a number of uncouth looking coops of regular size and placed "all in a row," holding in durance vile unlucky hens that kept up a perpetual chucking to their little broods as they ran in and out between the prison bars in vain quest of stray crumbs; while several turkeys were also held prisoners, suffering for their rambling propensities by being fastened with straps to stakes driven in the ground. Mrs. Johnson looked with pitying eye on the captives. She, kind soul, had pleasure in seeing every poor "dumb creture" enjoy its little term of life; and though orderly enough in her domestic management, never thought of sacrificing comfort to a passion for neatness.

Indoors the aspect was no more cheerful. The front room was as meagre of comfort as it well could be. There was no rocking-chair for the accommodation of the lazy—Mrs. Boyd despised such conveniences—and the most inveterate loungeur would fail in securing a comfortable position on the straight, hard settee, or the high backed chairs. The paper blinds were rolled up to just such a height, and, though the afternoon was warm, the windows were closed to exclude the dust.

Whether from the confined air or the dullness pervading everything, even to the five or six neighbors who

had been invited to tea, Grace felt an oppressive weariness stealing over her, and began to have sundry doubts as to the success of her undertaking. It was irksome, too, to have all those pairs of eyes staring fixedly at "the new teacher;" and to be obliged to listen with an appearance of interest to the stupid talk of women who had so long tied down their thoughts and feelings to the sordid cares of their every day life, that every spark of brightness or originality—every lofty aspiration of the mind and noble impulse of the heart—(supposing them ever to have possessed such), had long since died out. Disposed as she was to judge them charitably, Grace could not help feeling that they were coarse, narrow-minded, full of petty spite and malice, as such natures ever are; and she groaned inly as she wondered if all the Springlanders were like these, and acquitted Josh of the charge of exaggeration. From her brief reverie which was noted with displeasure by some of the company, she was roused by the mellow tones of Mrs. Johnson's voice so different from the sharp or droning voices of those about her.

"Miss Morton has heard him, I believe. Gracie, weren't you telling me last fall that you'd heard the great Baptist preacher?"

"I heard him preach on several occasions," replied Grace.

Mrs. Boyd's question of—"How did you like him?"

was lost in the loud exclamation of three or four at once—"Be you a Baptist, then?"

Grace replied in the negative.

"What then? A Methodist? I do hope you ain't an Episcopal—most town people are, I've heard say—and I do despise that religion, for they tell me it's most the same as the Popish."

Mrs. Johnson tried to break in on the subject, but every one was too intent on ascertaining the religious belief of the school-marm to pay any attention to the interruption.

Grace briefly informed them that she was a Catholic. Had she announced herself a lately arrived Hottentot or Sandwich Islander, the effect would have been less marked. Consternation was visible on every face.

Mrs. Boyd was the first to speak. "Well, if I ever—*did* you say you was a Papist?" she added doubtingly,

"No, ma'am," replied Grace calmly.

"O, I'm glad, for—"

"Why, yes, you did—we all heard you and we can't *all* be hard of hearing or too dumb to understand." This rude speech was from Mrs. Hedgewood, the lady famous for giving every one "a piece of her mind."

"I said I was a Catholic, madam."

Mrs. Johnson chuckled at the cool manner with which Grace put her down, and said, "You're just like me, Gracie dear, I hate nicknames, and always did, 'less it's them that's called for short, you know."

There was a long interval of silence. No one had a rejoinder ready. Even Mrs. Hedgewood, as she afterwards admitted, "was dumbfounded at the cool impudence of the gal, who set there looking out the windy as unconcerned as if she hadn't give no affront to nobody."

"That's one of the committee gone by," and with the words Mrs. Johnson, anxious to produce a diversion of thought, raised the window and called out, "Say, Mr. Smith, I hope you havn't forgot that certificate."

"All right," was the reply. "Neighbor Boyd's got it in his pocket."

Mrs. Johnson put down the window and began to say how glad she was that school was about to open again; she didn't believe it had been open a month together this last year.

"Why no—'seems though we had bad luck 'bout gettin' a teacher, said Mrs. Boyd, ever since that mean Victory Hall left, telling a parsel of fibs 'bout us every place she went far and near."

"Its right down scandalous the way that jade's went on," said Mrs. Hedgewood. "Was't any fault of ourn, I'd be glad to know, that she was skeered nigh to death by a calf? Ef she'd let him alone, I guess he wouldn't a'troubled hisself to come in her way."

"Well, now, you know 'twas me that put her up to it—" a Mrs. Stiggins here took up the subject—"but

good sakes! did I know she was such a body that she couldn't manage a little job like that! Purty one to take a school in hand when she let a calf git the better of her in that way."

"I never had no patience with such delicate-like critters; folk's that look's like they were made of white satin; don't see what airthly use they be," a side glance at the teacher accompanying Mrs. Hedgewood's remark.

"I guess I've heard that story told in as many as a dozen ways, and no two of them alike," said Mrs. Johnson.

"Well, I'll just tell ye how it was," began Mrs. Stiggins. "Ye see it happened at our place, and I shan't forget it 'till my dying day. I reckon I was purty well skairt at first, ye may b'lieve, but many a laugh I've had over it since. Well, you see, Victory, she came to board her week with us, an' one thing I'll say for her, we wasn't much out of pocket through her eatin, for she was the poorest eater ever I seen."

"That's something I've got to see yet," put in Mrs. Boyd, "a teacher boarding round that's a small eater."

"Well you hadn't a chance to know 'bout Victory, 'cause she left afore your turn to have her come round, ye know. Mabby Mrs. Joyce can tell ye the same as me.

"Law, what difference is it?" interrupted Mrs. Johnson testily. "I'd never think of noticing what people eat. Nobody can eat more'n they want. Let's hear about the calf, neighbor."

"I'm coming to it. But let me tell ye, Mrs. Johnson, if ye was to see some of them that board round you'd never say that folks can't eat more'n they want. There's no sich thing as filling them."

"Yes, an' the're always poking around, smellin' out anything nice, jist the same's a cat," chimed in Mrs. Boyd.

"Now, Victory, she wasn't one of that sort—she never come nigh the kitchen only when she was called to her meals, and wasn't no more trouble 'bout the house than if she was a mile away. So I wasn't a bit glad when the day was coming round for her to go somewhere else, as I most always was with the rest, and I stopped her as she was going by the kitchen the arternoon aforehand and told her so. Victory was right pleased with that, and we had a little talk together. I recollect right well what I was doin'. I was shellin' a lot of beans to lay up—our folks do eat a 'mazin' sight of beans in the winter—and while we was talkin' she got to shellin', and thought 'twas a nice little job. I told her them that hadn't other work waitin' for them might think so, but for my part I wish the beans grewed without pods. She laughed at

that, and said she'd shell them all if I'd let her, and I told her to shell away, I was glad enough to have her. So she sot down at the kitchen door, and I went in and out about my work, and putty soon she had the beans done, and says she, 'Is there anything else I can do, Mrs. Stiggins?' 'No, thankee,' says I, 'I believe I must do the rest myself.' I was working up a lump of dough jist then—'twas a monstrous lump of wheat and Injin, and I axed her what would she do, did she think, if she had to put them baby hands of her'n to work like that. Well, you'd never guess what the silly young thing said—said she wouldn't have one great lump of dough like that, she'd mix up part at a time, and make nice little loaves, and pans of rolls and biscuits, and things of that sort."

"Now wasn't that a smart notion, Gracie?" said good natured Mrs. Johnson, admiringly, while the other housewives were looking their scorn of such a schoolmarm's method of conquering difficulties.

"Mighty smart," resumed Mrs. Stiggins; "wonder how fur her nice loaves and rolls would go in feeding a family like our'n. Well, I happened to look out the windy just then, and I spied the calf pulling and tugging away at the rope that held him fast to a tree. 'Sakes alive!' says I, 'if I hain't forgot to move my poor calf from the tree that I tied him to afore breakfast, and he's eat all the grass he could reach to; you may

move him to the next tree, if you will,' says I to Victory. I seen she looked sort of skeer'd, ye know her city aunt had the bringing of her up sense she was the height of the table, and she's as skittish about a calf or a pig as if it was a mad bull. 'Is he very gentle, Mrs. Stiggins?' 'Who, that calf?' says I, 'why he's got no more harm in him than the kitten; I guess youv'e seen the children playing with him times enough.' Still she sort o' hung back, and I wasn't going to coax her more, so says I, 'never mind if ye don't want to, some of the young 'uns 'ill be along soon, I guess, and if they don't, soon's I git my hands out of the dough I can move him in less than no time. I spose that made her sort of shamed, for says she, 'I'll try it of course, if there was any danger you'd know it,' and off she went. I wasn't thinking anything about it when a loud scream brought me to the windy putty quick, and I jist had to hold my sides and laugh and laugh. Our pastur lot, ye know, is on rising ground, jist back of the house. Well, the calf was taking the lead up the hill, pulling away at the rope and kicking out with all his might every few steps, and there at the other end was Victory, dragging away, with the rope ('twas a good strong rope, and putty long, too), wound all round her useless bits of hands. I *did* want to call to her to let go, but I was so full of laugh I couldn't to save me, and jist then who should come down the

road but that mischievous Jake Brown, and he sung out as if he was terribly frightened—'Hold on to the rope, don't let go, whatever you do.' So she thought there was no hope for her 'less she'd hold on, and hold on she did, sure enough, and she had a smart race that day, poor thing, if she'd never git another. Well, she followed the calf up to the top, with them long curls of her'n a streamin', and her white gown a flutterin' in the wind, and then what should the wicked brute do but turn short round and bring her down again on the run. I tell you 'twas a sight to see 'em, the critter making great bounds that brought him down the hill like a streak, and Victory flying after, her feet scarce touching the ground, through the pastur and across the yard, (she'd left the gate open when she went through), 'till he brought her up at the kitchen door so sudden that she fell over, and he was trying to drag her along for another frolic when I jist cut the rope and let him go his ways, while I tended to Victory. She was as white as any sheet you ever seen, and 'twas a good while 'till I could git her round agin, for she was all of a tremble; and her hands—they were a sight, round and round them it almost cut into the flesh. However, 'cept that and the fright, there was no harm done, and that was more'n I thought for when I seen the fust of that race with the calf."

"Such a thing to throw up a good school for," commented Mrs. Boyd with a sneer.

"Why it never could a'been jest for that," said Mrs. Johnson incredulously.

"'Twas for that and nothing else. Of course since she's left, she's made up tales of I can't begin to tell how many things that we done to her, but not one in a dozen's true. Them that wants to believe her may, but nothing in the world made her go off in such a way but this thing about the calf—before the term was half up, too."

"She was bothered enough about it, no doubt, for you see Jake Brown he told the whole school all about it—he was watching all the time through the fence—and so when any of them young rascallions wanted to raise a muss, they had only to say calf loud enough for the little 'uns to hear, and the whole of them would begin to giggle and titter, and when the teacher tried to make 'em stop they only got worse. The children was all tickled half to death at the thoughts of it, and no wonder, I say; but Victory she took it into her head that they was put up to it at home; (mabby they was so fur's hearing us laugh about a grown woman not being able to hold her own with a miserable calf); she said we disrespected her on account of it and taughted them to do the same, so she wouldn't stay."

"For my part I was jist as well pleased that she

went," said Mrs. Boyd, "for she never made the children mind her a bit, and I couldn't see but what mine knew jist as much before she come as they done before she went away."

"I believe in a teacher making the children stand round," said another, and there was a general chorus of assent to this sentiment. Then a long procession of 'our teachers' passed in mental review before the assembled critics, and each one was 'well handled'; one was too talkative and forward, another 'never opened her head'; one was a little flutterbudget that was all given up to the world and its varieties, and another was too pious to live; all had some fault that rendered the getting clear of them a most delightful thing, with one exception. They had been favored with one treasure, it seemed, who made the children 'stand round, and learn too,' she had a most excellent mode of imparting knowledge, 'pointing along the line' of the primmer or spelling-book with a serviceable piece of rattan, while she held an ear of the learner between the finger and thumb of the other hand, 'and if they made a mistake, or wasn't minding their book, *wouldn't* that ear git a pinch! so what with the rattan and the finger and thumbshe made them mind what they were about.' But alas! this model of a teacher got married and was lost to them. A bold man the groom must have been, thought Grace

to whom the discussion was very agreeable and entertaining.

Nor had they been more fortunate in 'the men teachers' whom they had been induced to try from time to time. One had been grum and unsociable, 'always poking over his books,' another was, forever 'skurrying round with his gun and fishing pole; every unlucky wight had given offence in some way to somebody. The last one had actually had the audacity to fall in love with Mrs. Hedgewood's oldest daughter. It was never exactly known whether the damsel had favored his suit, but the mother had told her as she now boasted that 'she'd rather put her in her coffin than give her to such a pitiful chap.'

"I know jist how you felt," said Mrs. Stiggins. "I was afeard for awhile that he was thinking of sparking my Mary Jane, but I'd soon a'showed him the door in that case—school-teachin' folks ain't any great shakes, I think. That is—'making a clumsy effort to explain away her rudeness, as a 'nudge' from Mrs. Boyd made her conscious of it—"that is—I mean—they can't be counted on to support a wife and family."

"Heigho!" thought Grace, "what a hornet's nest I have got into."

She was sorely tempted for a moment to decline the certificate so pompously tendered by Mr. Boyd, leaving

to some one else the delightful task of teaching school in Springland, but conquering the impulse, she resolved to go boldly through with what she had undertaken. Walking back to the pleasant old homestead by the light of the harvest moon, she could not refrain from inquiring if all the Springlanders were like Mrs. Boyd and her visitors, and took comfort from Mrs. Johnson's assurance that some few of them were different.

"But they are a hard set, I must say," continued Mrs. Johnson after a few moment's silence. "I almost wish now that you wern't going among them. However you needn't stay but the term you know, and remember, you're to come *home* every Saturday and stay with us till Monday. I'll send the light wagon for you in bad weather. Someway I feel sure that you'll get along with them folks better than anybody they've had yet. My old man used to say that there was some people that never could be put down, let what might come in their way—they were sure to carry through whatever they undertook. And you must be one of them, I know, or you could never get through all you have this year, and be so bright and happy withal. Law! if anybody had told me a year ago how 'twas going to be with you, would I believe them?"

The good dame's words were more encouraging than she deemed. In reminding Grace of the various trials

she had lately experienced, they reminded her also of the 'rock on which her hopes were stayed.' She remembered that she had voluntarily chosen this path, and must not be deterred from treading it by the difficulties that beset her progress; that the life of a Christian is not one of rest and selfish ease, but of active duty and patient endurance as opportunity for either is afforded. "What a shame to be a delicate member of a head crowned with thorns!"

CHAPTER XVI.

Life's Discipline.

"For the structure that we raise,
Life is with materials filled,
Our to-days and yesterdays
Are the stores with which we build.
Truly shape and fashion these,
Leave no yawning gaps between;
Think not because no man sees,
Such things will remain unseen."

The schoolhouse at Springland was one of those dingy, unsightly edifices which, notwithstanding the vaunted "march of improvement," still disfigure so many rural landscapes. It was built of wood, one story in height, with small windows and a low narrow doorway, and was "charmingly situated," some persons thought, being perched on a hill a little back from the dusty, unshaded road which was bounded on both sides by straggling stone walls under which flourished a choice profusion of mullens and burdocks.

There was a large attendance the morning that was to witness Grace's first attempt at school-teaching. A motley group of all ages—from the toddling things just sent to school "to keep them out of mischief," to the "grown-up" boys and girls whose school days were nearly over—were clustered round the door,

some staring anxiously, some boldly at "the school ma'am," to whom they seemed more like a set of untamed savages than the bright-eyed, smiling little group fancy had conjured up when she first turned her thoughts to teaching a country school.

Most teachers of district schools have found by woful experience the fallacy of the poetic idea which in their days of happy ignorance they had ever been ready to quote, that it is a

"Delightful task to rear the tender mind—

To teach the young idea how to shoot!"

But in addition to the inevitable cares and annoyances attending the delightful "task," the Spring-land school had some peculiar to itself, and requiring no ordinary degree of patient firmness and perseverance. The frequent change of teachers, and the long holidays arising therefrom had made the urchins great and small, as forward in truancy and insubordination as they were backward in education. Their injudicious parents had fostered a contempt for school masters and mistresses by their continual harpings on the subject; so that there had long been a spirit of rivalry as to which could give most trouble to the obnoxious personage, and set his or her authority at open defiance. The parents saw the effect without having any idea of the cause; they lamented that "the children were getting more obstrepulous every day of

their lives;" who was in fault?—the *teacher*, beyond all doubt; and so the wise men and women were as eager as the children themselves to "get rid" of each successive representative of that ill-paid, well-abused class.

Grace felt that she had undertaken a business of no little difficulty. There were almost invincible habits of idleness and truancy to be combatted; a reckless spirit of insubordination and open defiance of authority to be put down; a love of study, of order, of neatness, to be implanted in natures apparently antagonistic to all gentle, refining or enobling influences. If she could have called to her aid the all-pervading influence of religion, her task would have been much lightened; but this was, of course, impossible. She could only labor earnestly and unweariedly with a conscientious endeavor to fulfil the onerous duties of the office she had undertaken; turning ever to the unfailing source of strength and light when her burden pressed too heavily, or her inexperience led her into error. The children studied her with that shrewd insight into character in which most children, however rough or ignorant, are adepts, and soon came to the conclusion that this teacher was of a totally different kind from those to whom they had been accustomed. All the pranks by which they had contrived to tire out her predecessors were tried without avail; of some

she took no notice; others she checked with an energy and firmness that forbade their repetition. The scholars wondered, resisted, fortified themselves with a double share of dogged determination not to let her get ahead of them; still, little by little, they found themselves getting into the traces, though they never could tell how it was done.

One day the committee surprised teacher and pupils with a visit, coming unexpectedly at the suggestion of their wives who "wanted of all things to know how that gal managed the school." Grace received her visitors with a quiet dignity that abashed them at first, but her affable manner soon put them at ease. One of the committee expressing a desire to have a class examined, Grace replied that the children were not yet prepared for an exhibition of their progress; that those who had long been accustomed to idleness could not be expected to apply industriously to their lessons at once.

"Jest so," spoke up Mr. Boyd. "For my sheer I think you've done wonders these few weeks; if they haven't larned one book lesson of you yet, you've teach'd them one jist as important 'cording to my notions. Only see how well behaved and orderly-like they be," he added, turning to his fellow members, who ungrudgingly added their testimony, one of them remarking that he "never before could hear *his own ears* in that school."

"As for my boy, Sam, I'm afraid you'll find him a hard one to manage, ma'am, Mr. Boyd resumed, "but jest let me know when you find him going agin you, and I'll take him in hand. Find him pooty obstropolous now and then, don't yon?"

"Oh, Mr. Boyd, you must not expect me to answer that; one of our rules is not to tell tales out of school." answered Grace gaily, with a smile to her pupils, whose faces brightened with pleasure.

Her questioner laughed good-humoredly. "So that's your plan, is it? Shouldn't wonder if Sam thinks it a first-rate one, for many's the unmarciful trouncing I've give him after hearing complaints from the teachers 'bout his carrying's-on. Long as he's been coming to school he's had the name of being the very worst chap in it, and I'd like to find out, you see, whether he's kept to the same name yet, or if he's let some one else get ahead of him in that line."

The committee laughed loudly at the father's laudable curiosity, and of course the teacher and the scholars laughed too. Then Grace shook her head with a merry air of refusal.

"I can't enlighten you on that point, my good sir."

"I know—don't tell tales, eh?" he interposed with a shrewd wink.

"Not only for that reason, but because we don't have any worse chaps now—our aim is rather to find out who can be the best."

A loud 'hurrah!' from the larger boys, in which they were quickly joined by the rest, testified their admiration of "the slick way" she got ahead of the committee man; and there was one whose shout was louder and more prolonged than all the rest, and that was the redoubtable Sam. For it chanced that on that very day Sam had committed a serious offence against the rules, for which the teacher had inflicted a penalty so utterly inadequate even in his estimation, that the perverse fellow mentally pronounced her "ridiculous." On hearing his father's question he was seized with a sudden fit of terror, for well he knew what would be the consequence of the revelation which, judging from similar events in the past, he had no doubt would be made. He had a very distinct consciousness that he was still 'the very worst chap' in the school, that he gloried in the distinction, and took pleasure in resisting, as far as he dared, all "the new school-ma'am's" efforts to make him better. But when he found how generously she had evaded giving an answer which would have brought down upon him the terrible anger of his father, the boy's feelings underwent a quick révolution; for the first time in his young life he experienced the sweet emotions of gratitude.

His teachers heretofore, not content with punishing his frequent transgressions themselves, had never shrank from procuring him additional punishment

from the father, who, however kind on other occasions, had never learned to temper justice with mercy. His mother, who every day of her life declared Sam was possessed if ever a boy was, followed the teachers' example. Sam could not remember that she had ever interfered between him and his incensed parent,—Mrs. Boyd was above such womanly weakness—his brothers, and sisters and schoolmates, far from sympathizing with him, made merry over the scrapes poor Sam was constantly getting into. But here was one who stood between him and a dreaded anger. The boy's heart was touched. He secretly vowed henceforward to do everything to please the new teacher, who was "a first rate fellow, not a bit like them mean things that used to have that desk;" and, barring an occasional relapse into his old ways, he kept the resolution, to the delight of the mistress and the wonderment of the scholars. As he had been one of the ringleaders in every mischief, his reformation was not without a salutary effect on the whole school.

Ere long the reputation of the new teacher's management, which the Johnsons took every opportunity of spreading, induced some of the neighboring farmers to send their children to the hitherto despised school. Among them were several whose eager desire to learn, and manners so different from those of the rough Springlanders, afforded relief to the young school

mistress, though she was very careful not to show her partiality. Susy Blake, a black eyed, rosy cheeked damsel of sixteen, whose education had been sadly neglected, was one of this number. The Blakes were Mrs. Johnson's nearest neighbors. As had been already intimated to Grace, the two families which had been for years on the most friendly terms, were to be drawn more closely together by the union of Josh and Susy at no very distant day.

Grace began to find her position much less difficult and unpleasant than she had imagined, though there were inconveniences attending it which time alone, and perhaps not even that, could remedy. Worst of these was having to "board round," that odious system which some one has aptly described as like going into a succession of cold beds on a winter night—as soon as the chill goes off of one, you must get into another. But Grace felt comparatively few of the disadvantages of the system, on account of her weekly visits to Mrs. Johnson, who expected her as regularly as Friday evening or Saturday morning came round. And how pleasant to the young teacher was the transition from the houses of even the better sort of Springland folks, to the cosy, comfortable, old homestead; how gratifying the warm welcome that always awaited her there; how agreeable the acquaintance she formed by this means with some of the residents of W.; more

particularly Robert Johnson and his family, who, with a little more education and refinement than the senior Mrs. Joshson, had all her sociable, hearty, hospitable ways. But immeasurably dearer, more prized than all, was the opportunity she thus enjoyed of attending the little church of W., which, more fortunate than most Catholic churches in that region, had the advantage of a resident Priest, through whom the congregation enjoyed the privilege of hearing Mass and Vespers on every Sunday and holiday. Father P—— encouraged Grace to persevere in her undertaking, and gave her much valuable counsel suggested by his knowledge of the various phases of human nature.

So Grace, quite sanguine of success, wrote to her friends at Oakdale pleasant accounts of her progress, and to her brother glowing accounts of W., which pleasant town she hoped would be their future place of abode. But this letter remained unanswered, and to her dismay she soon afterwards learned that Alfred had left college and gone to Europe with Tom. Elwood. There was a darker feature in the case, of which happily she remained ignorant. To raise money for travelling expenses, Alfred had borrowed considerable sums of several of his classmates, giving them notes on the *other heirs*, which the holders, as soon as they found themselves short of funds, presented to Mrs. Althorpe for payment. That lady guarding the youth's

reputation as she would a son's, paid the money without question or comment, destroyed the notes and kept the matter a profound secret.

It was well for poor Grace that she knew nothing of this transaction. Her grief for her brother's rash proceeding, disappointment of long cherished hopes in his regard, and torturing anxiety for his future course, were sufficiently trying without the additional pang which a knowledge of such an act would inflict. Henceforth her toilsome lot was divested of the one cheering hope which had rendered it tolerable. She had no longer anything to look forward to on this earth; life held for her no bright prospect; it stretched before her, bleak, barren and wearisome. How she wished she might follow the example of her friend, Angela, who was now about to accomplish a wish cherished since her childhood, of becoming a Sister of Charity. But Grace had no vocation for the life of a religious. She sighed drearily at the bleak prospect before her, and began to argue with herself. Perhaps 'twas well; perhaps, after all, this path, lonesome and rugged as it was, was the one that would most safely conduct her "to a home not made with hands—eternal in the heavens." Perhaps if it were less dreary, less devoid of all human love and comforts, she might turn aside from the straight and narrow way, and building her hopes on the earth, forget in its transient

allurements that she was destined for higher things. Perhaps—but how futile are all such arguments and reasonings, to comfort the aching heart, to ease the thought-racked brain! He alone who to the wisdom of the Godhead joins a perfect knowledge of human weakness and anguish—He can teach the drooping spirit to find what most it needs, but seeks in vain until it turns to Him. That gracious invitation, "Come to me all you who labor and are heavy burthened, and I will refresh you," shines out like a star of promise amid the blackness and storm-clouds of life's sky, a light in hours of deepest gloom, a guide in seasons of direst trial. And well had Grace learned to give heed to that tender, "Come unto me." She came to Him at the foot of the altar, where with love that wearies not though so poorly requited, He remains as the counsellor of the doubtful, the strength of the feeble, the consoler of the afflicted; she came to Him and found in that celestial banquet sweet refreshment to strengthen her for her onward way.

And sorely did she need supernatural strength and fortitude now, for her lot was one of ever recurring difficulties and annoyances. The days in the school-house were at the best toilsome and monotonous, taxing her energies to the utmost, since only by constant vigilance and the strictest supervision, could she hope to maintain the order to which she brought her turbu-

lent little kingdom. Often too, were her most promising plans frustrated by the opposition of wrong-headed parents and friends. If she had flattered herself that, by promoting the moral and intellectual welfare of the children, she would gain the good will of the elder portion of the little community, she was doomed to be signally disappointed; for with a perversity unfortunately too common even among more intelligent and refined persons than those with whom Grace had to deal, they resented the influence which she had acquired over her pupils, exerted though it was solely for their good, and with extreme care not to infringe on the parents' province.

One thought "things was coming to a pooty pass when a young gal like that pertended to know more about managing young 'uns than the parents of 'em." Another declared she "was gettin' most afraid to lay a finger on one of her children since the school-ma'am came" with her system of government, which was just the opposite of the "making them stand round" system so much in vogue. And another, whose grievance was yet more intolerable, thought "'twas a pooty how d'ye do, if she was to take sass from the teacher through her children," which terrible charge proved to have no other foundation than the fact that on asking her daughter to run out to the fence where her father was talking to a neighbor, and while playing about

there listen to what they were saying, and then run back to tell it to mother, the child had hesitated between old habit and some lately acquired lessons, and finally excused herself on the ground that "teacher" had told them never to listen when people were talking among themselves, nor to repeat what they might happen to hear.

Nor were "the men folks" better pleased in general than their censorious partners. They discovered much to find fault with, particularly "this new-fangled notion" of giving the scholars so much explanation, and making their lessons easy. While others thought that *this* teacher took a great deal on herself in insisting on having the whole charge of the school, and permitting no interference; to be sure, her way was a good enough one, but others equally as interested had a right to have their way sometimes. In boarding round, these charges and insinuations, and a hundred besides, came to the knowledge of Grace, who found that not all the manifest improvement of the children in learning and good conduct could reconcile the parents to her or her peculiar way.

But after all her religion was incontestibly "the head and front of her offending." This condemned her in the eyes even of those who might have been charitably disposed to overlook the rest. That the school-mistress never made her appearance at meeting

was a circumstance not to be lightly regarded, and the probability that she would be instilling her heathenish creed into the children "on the sly," called for every watchman on the tower of Israel to be on the alert. Had they been acquainted with her "Popish views" beforehand, she certainly never would have obtained entrance into that school-house as a candidate for the post of teacher; and strenuous efforts had been made to have her discharged almost as soon as engaged. But the committee, delighted with "her learning and good manners," held out against all the noisy clamor with which they were assailed. The ill-luck of the school had long been a grievous affliction to those gentlemen, and having conceived great hopes of what the new teacher would be able to do with the children, they obstinately refused to see the danger which others saw so plainly, and allowed their interest in the school to quite overbalance their zeal for religion. This was the more shameful, inasmuch as two of them were actually members in good standing, and the other had long entertained serious thoughts of becoming a "professor." Had they lived in the palmy days of Puritanism, the school-mistress would surely have been brought to trial on a charge of bewitching the school-committee, and the minister also, who had often been heard to say that he believed Miss Morton to be a right-minded, sincere Christian, whatever

might be her peculiar views on some points of doctrine, and that she was effecting a great deal of good in Springland, and no harm so far as he could learn. The zealots mourned over the lax views of the minister, whom more than one believed to be "not much better than a Papist himself—" but with him as well as the committee against them, what could they do? Nothing but to seek to vent their spleen upon one, who had, according to them, brought discord into their quiet village (?) and this they did most faithfully in every way that the malice and ingenuity of petty minds could invent. But like the children, they found that there was a point beyond which they could not go. The teacher, mild and forbearing as she ordinarily was, learning meekly to "endure all things," and in truth pitying much more than she blamed them, had yet a way of "putting them down" most effectually when they were going too far, and making them for the moment conscious and half ashamed of their ill-natured rudeness.

CHAPTER XVII.

A Husking Party.

"There is a time for mirth."

The merry-makings of the good old times—the quilting frolics, corn huskings and apple bees, had been gradually falling into disuse in that region of country, and were now only kept up by a few of the old fashioned, hospitably-inclined farmers, who, still adhering to the pleasant customs of their younger days, loved to gather their neighbors old and young around them for a frolic, all the more enjoyed from its rarity. Susy Blake's grandfather was one of these, and his wife, happily, was of disposition akin to his own; a hale, hearty, genial old couple, whose faces time's hand had touched but lightly, and their hearts not at all. Last year sickness had interfered with their customary husking party, but now arrangements were made for one in due season, and as Susy told Grace a larger number were to be invited than ever, and a gayer time was anticipated, to make up for the previous disappointment. Of course the Johnsons, old and young, were going, and with them the school-mistress, for old Mrs. Johnson was not likely to allow her to miss the fun. The school, accordingly, was to have a holiday, and several of the young men and maidens of Spring-

land were also invited to join the merry throng; much to the disgust of "Joshuway" who vehemently insisted that their presence would spoil sport, and that if they were going he was not. But he magnanimously submitted when his mother represented to him that unless "brother Carver" and a few others of like influence in the community were propitiated by an invitation to *their* young people, it would be impossible to gain consent to closing the school that the teacher might go. Josh cleared his brow and admitted his mother's generalship.

Mrs. Johnson, who delighted above all things in getting ready for company, was accustomed on these occasions to repair to the old Blake homestead at an early hour in the day, accompanied of late years by Susy Blake, for the purpose of helping forward the multitudinous preparations. This time she rejoiced in having another coadjutor in the person of Grace, who was delighted at the prospect of so pleasant an interruption to the monotony of her life. A pleasant drive of two hours, mostly through forests gorgeous with all the rainbow tints of autumn, brought them to the homestead, a long, low building, whose moss-covered roof was overshadowed by two immense elms, their graceful foliage now showing a beautiful blending of green and straw color. As in most old country houses its pleasantest room was the kitchen, which

was the largest Grace had ever seen, with a great cavern of a fire place, and an oven large enough to do the baking for a regiment, and a proportionate supply of cooking utensils adorning the walls. It was a delightful place to work in, and our trio of volunteer "helps" were soon at work in full force on the culinary preparations. There was so much to be done, for grandmother Blake would not think of setting before her guests any victuals got ready a day or two in advance. Everything must be freshly prepared on the great day itself, even to the butter, to which she was giving the "second working" when her assistants arrived.

Mrs. Johnson was in her glory. She pinned back her cap strings, tied on a check apron, nearly enveloped Grace's slender form in a similar one, and then set to work with a will. Susy was already deep in the mysteries of cake making, and Grace was as busily employed in the part assigned to her, which consisted for the most part, in devising sundry ornamental "fixings" that would certainly "astonish the natives." The two elderly ladies took no little pride in the certainty that the supper table that night would be such as had never been witnessed in those parts; and their pleasure was heightened by ascertaining that Grace could make biscuits from a receipt of the housekeeper at Oakdale, which was entirely different from any that

either of them had ever heard of. What could be more satisfactory? So the two girls wrought merrily at the dainties, while the matrons had their hands full in preparing the substantials, which after all would prove the most attractive part of the banquet to the male guests, and possibly to not a few of the females—making huge loaves of bread, roasting chickens to a turn to be eaten cold, and boiling corned beef to be eaten hot. Grandmother Blake's smile became more and more exultant as the pantry shelves began to be crowded with an array of delicious edibles; and Mrs. Johnson bustled about more merrily, taking a hundred times more pleasure, as she averred, in the getting of things ready for the frolic, than she expected to derive from the frolic itself.

"My time for such things is over, you see," she said laughingly to the girls; "it is only young things like you two that can enjoy them."

"But getting things ready for one always puts me in mind of the great doings we used to have in our house when I was a gal."

"Yes, and of the doings you used to have in your own house, too, I guess," said grandmother Blake from the pantry.

"Yes, but that's a good while ago," and the dame heaved a heavy sigh. "Seems like I never felt like having any good times ever since N. got married and

went so far off to live, and then her father died, and that made it worse. But some of these days, I reckon, we'll have as merry times as ever in the old place, when Josh brings me home a nice darter," she added with a smile and a significant glance that sent the blood in a torrent to the face and neck of one of her auditors, who just then happening to find that "more eggs were wanting for the custards," went off in all haste to hunt up a new supply.

The two dames and Grace looked smilingly after the blushing girl.

"How pleasant it will be to you to have such a daughter-in-law," said Grace,

"She jest seems like one of my own, and has from her cradle up. Ever since she and Josh were two little creturs, it's been my hope that they'd take a fancy to one another, and I don't think he's much more anxious for the wedding day than I am."

The afternoon was devoted by the girls to the pleasant task of embellishing the great barn, which was to be the scene of the merry-making. Susy's young brothers and sisters, who had arrived with their mother soon after dinner, were sent to gather "great lots" of forest treasures; while grandfather Blake had no unimportant part to fulfil in making the chandeliers (of barrel heads) that were to throw light on the festive scene.

"Merry hearts make light work," and everything was in readiness before the early hour at which the company began to assemble. Young and old, and middle-aged, male and female; on foot, on horseback, and in all sorts of conveyances, they came in throngs up to the old homestead; all in Sunday clothes, and with Sunday faces, seemingly oppressed with a profound sense of the importance of the occasion. Notwithstanding the hearty welcome they received, the majority were more disposed to use their eyes than their tongues, and many, especially of the young men, had an uncomfortable consciousness of possessing hands, and were greatly at a loss how to dispose of those useful, but just then inconvenient members. But soon a summons to begin the work of the evening banished the stiff and awkward restraint.

The vast barn was like a woodland bower. At each end were great heaps of ripe yellow ears, peeping out from their coverings of pale gold. Festoons of hemlock and pine tufts hid the dark walls; heavy garlands of the same brightened with parti-colored branches, the soft gold of the maple, the red and orange of the hickory, the yellowish green of the locust—concealed the rafters overhead, and waved gracefully to and fro; while the flame-colored boughs of the huckleberry and the vivid red tufts of the sumach gleamed out here and there among the dark

evergreens like masses of fire. Three rustic chandeliers thickly studded with candles shed a warm bright radiance over the busy workers; good humored bantering and bursts of merry laughter mingled with the soft rustling of the husks and the fall of the golden ears, that swelled the heap higher and higher as each gay group worked on with a spirit of industrious emulation.

The old farmer had the post of honor, his easy chair having been placed beneath the centre chandelier whence he could survey the animated scene. Grace was beside him; and Susy was here and there and everywhere, helping one group, hindering another, and bandying pleasant nonsense with a third; her black eyes sparkling, her rosy cheeks dimpling with smiles, her joyous laugh ringing out with the wild abandon of a heart that had never known a care. She had warned Josh, who it must be confessed, was apt to be troubled with "the green-eyed monster," that he mustn't expect to hang around her in his usual fashion this evening; it was her business to go about among the guests, making them all feel at home, it was his to make himself agreeable, but particularly to attend to Grace who was his mother's friend and invited guest, and was not accustomed to the rough doings common at such gatherings.

The young man submitted to the imperious behests

of his lady love the more willingly on account of this last clause, and immediately established himself in the vicinity of Grace, to whom he paid such marked attentions that several of the girls began to whisper among themselves, casting the while suspicious glances from the pair to Susy, whom they emphatically designated "a great goose."

On a sudden there was a yell of triumph. "Look a there, boys—I've got the fust red ear—I have!" and with the words a great clumsily built fellow flourished aloft an ear of red corn, and scrambled in an awkward hurry to his feet, while divers young men cast looks of envious anger on the favorite of fortune, and more than one audibly muttered—"a fool for luck!"

Nowise disconcerted, the fortunate individual, who had long stiff hair of a charming tow-color, and eyes as blue as bits of delf ware, and about as expressive, walked or rather *straddled* forward, brandishing the red ear far above his head, and to the horror of Grace suddenly drew up before her, and removing an enormous quid of tobacco from his capacious mouth, informed her that "as he'd got the first red ear he'd got to kiss all the good-looking gals present, and would begin with her."

Grace declined the honor, but the swain saying that gals always acted jist so, was proceeding to put his threat into execution when Josh coolly interposed his

giant form between them. "Mr. Daniel Roy I'd have you to know that you don't kiss any lady against her will that's under my care."

"You don't say so," drawled Mr. Roy, trying to put on as bold an air as his antagonist. "Spose ye jist stand aside a little—durned if I keer whose keer she's under. I'm a feller what knows my rights and what's more will have 'em."

"If you wan't to be knocked into the middle of next week, just come on," said Josh beginning to unbutton his wristbands.

But Mr. Daniel thinking discretion the better part of valor, backed out with a forced laugh muttering, "Don't keer a snap!—Only axed her 'cause I thought 'twould be rude-like to pass by a stranger." Here a glimpse of Susy who was flitting by suggested a capital way of being revenged on Josh, and he made a grab at her with his great, loose-jointed paws. But the maiden sprang aside with the quickness of a deer, and bounded lightly to the top of the stalk heap, whence she surveyed him with a most provoking air of saucy defiance. The barn was now ringing with the eager clamor of voices and peals of merry laughter. All had stopped work, the girls dancing over and around the pile of husks, clapping their hands like mad things; the young men eager to see the fun, crying out, "Hurry up, Dan, or you'll not get through all night."

Dan needed no urging, but unluckily his first stride brought him knee-deep with the mountain of corn-stalks, his clumsy efforts to extricate himself provoking a fresh burst of laughter from the crowd of lookers-on; while Susy, with her arms folded, looked down from her "airy height" with the most aggravating coolness, defying him to climb up. Climb up, however, he did, at the same moment the agile maiden sprang down, and with loud shouts of laughter echoed by her companions, dodged round and round the heap, allowing Dan to almost catch her and eluding his grasp without apparent effort just as he was proclaiming "he'd got her," till both were glad to pause for a breathing spell.

"O, Dan, I wouldn't stand that!" "Blamed if I'd let every gal stump me!" roared the mischievous youngsters, delighted to tease one who was generally regarded as "a spoony," and Dan, irritated by this allusion to his former defeat, returned valiantly to the charge this time with more success. Making a dash he caught his fair tormentor, who now seemed resigned to her fate, and bent forward to secure the recompense of his mighty exertions, while loud shouts of "Hurrah! Dan's a trump!" and the musicians of the evening whistled, "See the conquering hero comes." But in a twinkling Dan lay sprawling amid the corn-stalks, looking like anything but a conquering hero. The

hurras changed to groans for the fellow that let a little gal knock him down.

"No, she didn't nuther," returned that personage, sitting up and gazing around with a rueful face. "Guess you'd any of you fell down, if you felt a durned pin run clean through and through your lip!"

The tumult of shouts and laughter broke forth wilder, louder, more furious than ever. The roguish Susy triumphantly removed the pin which she had dexterously inserted between her teeth, casting a sly glance at the delighted Josh; while the crest-fallen hero of the red ear dolefully rubbed his wounded lip, and then looked closely at his hand, refusing with his favorite expletive the "handkerchers" gravely proffered to stop the flow of blood, with taunting exhortations "to try again—there was lots o' gals left." But luckless Dan, too thoroughly disconcerted by the results of his first attempts to claim his rights, took himself off with the air of a deeply injured individual.

The mirthful groups fell to work again with renewed energy. The husks rustled softly, the golden corn flashed downward, the laugh and jest and song again went round. Grandmother Blake and Mrs. Johnson from time to time came in, watched the merry-makers for a few minutes and then disappeared. Anon Grace and Susy at a telegraphic signal followed the bustling dames; but soon Susy reappeared and whispering to

her grandfather, the welcome summons to supper, brought the whole company to their feet in double quick time.

A long table reaching the whole length of the great kitchen, was spread for supper—and such a supper! The brownest of doughnuts, and the yellowest of sponge cakes; hard gingerbread and soft gingerbread; crisp jumbles and old fashioned buns; hot corn-cake and cold short-cake; hot and cold biscuits of every kind; the lightest bread and the richest butter; custards and tarts and pies by the dozen—to say nothing of the huge dishes of meat, and the great pitchers of amber-colored cider and pearly milk. And then the great pyramidal cake in the centre with its ornamental frosting—the baskets and dishes of purple grapes, and pippins, green, yellow and red, all so tastily arranged and peeping out coyly from amid clustering foliage—the garlands and boquets of autumn flowers and autumn leaves, brightening up the table with their gorgeous hues—no wonder the guests stood in silent awe, some of them in open mouthed admiration of the beautiful display, on which a rustic chandelier similar to those in the barn, but smaller, cast a soft mellow radiance.

"Hallo, neighbor! that there fixin' over the table's somethin' uncommon, aint it?" drawled out the valiant Dan, who had emerged from obscurity at the magic

word supper. "Mighty good notion though, shows off all the table at one sight. Lots of good things—I'm going right in for the eatin', I am," suiting the action to the word.

The spell was broken, Dan's ravenous example found plenty of followers, and Grace was amazed to see the rapidity with which the eatables and drinkables vanished. Good Mrs. Blake had surely cause to be gratified, not only by the admiration her supper had excited, but by the hearty testimony given to the excellence of her fare. The business of eating was dispatched with genuine Yankee haste, for what the majority deemed the best part of the evening's entertainment was yet to come. Old farmer Blake, though he had been for years a member of church, had no conscientious scruples against a fiddle or a dance, perhaps some recollections of the "ungodly days of his youth" were too strong for subsequent impressions to replace—and at his house the young people were always welcome to enjoy a pleasure which most steady heads of families held in abhorrence. So time was too precious to be wasted. A few moments sufficed to arrange the little extra finery which beaux and belles had brought for the occasion, and then like a flock of bright plumaged birds the young girls came fluttering out, and all trooped away in a hubbub of joyous excitement to the barn.

The corn-stalks had meantime been removed, the corn tidily piled up in the corners, the floor swept, and the vast barn with its starry lights and evergreen banners presented a fine field for the display of terpsichorean ability. Eager couples rushed forward good humoredly contending for the precedence; the musician, with an air of dignified deliberation befitting his august position, proceeded to screw up his instrument and "rosin the bow;" then without warning or prelude dashed vigorously into "Yankee Doodle—" sending the eager partners whirling, flying down the outside, up the middle, swinging corners with little enough knowledge of the steps, or care to follow the music, but with such wild abandonment to the spirit of enjoyment that their careless unstudied motions and postures were full of natural grace like a child's. A critical spectator would have failed to recognize the various dances, amid the extraneous and superfluous links and steps the dancers contrived to introduce, but what mattered that?—their object was to enjoy themselves, and enjoyment according to their ideas consisted rather in vigorous exercise than in walking through the figures, or following in a beaten track.

The elders and those who had "a conscience against dancing," were amusing themselves in a quieter way, looking on, or conversing in little knots of two and

three, but their numbers lessened as one by one becoming infected with the spirit of hilarity, panting as they reached the bottom of the set, yet unable even then to subside into inaction, giving each other an impromptu whirl, or breaking into a double shuffle, anything to keep their feet in motion 'till their turn came round again. Anon the music swelled into gayer, bolder strains, faster and faster flew the dancers sparkling eyes, blooming cheeks, gay dresses and fluttering ribbons of every hue, forming a charming kaleidoscope, the floor trembled beneath the buoyant steps; the evergreen garlands shook and rustled on the walls; the lights twinkled, rolled and wavered as if in sympathy with the ever changing scene. Presently the sedate lookers-on caught the enthusiasm, grandfather Blake, declaring himself as young as anybody, seized Mrs. Johnson's plump hands and drew her forward—Luke Carver followed suit with Mrs. Blake, unheeding her laughing expostulations, and in a moment the whole company were tripping, whirling and racing—all doing their best, and all inspired with a kindred excitement.

"'Twas right and left, and down outside, six round] and back to back;

Harum-scarum, helter-skelter, bump together, whack!"

Until one after another was glad to break away from the giddy maze, falling back against the wall, panting

breathless, and declaring themselves "beat out;" leaving the floor in undisputed possession of the adepts, who still held out with no thought of giving up; even when the musician paused from sheer weariness, and the circle broke into pairs continuing the dance in a promiscuous way, balancing, gliding, humming and whistling the favorite airs.

And at last when all reluctantly came to a stand, Luke Carver happened to remember that his sister knew a dance prettier than any they had—she had learned it in Philadelphia, and if there was only some one to join in she'd show them what waltzing was. Upon which Susy and Josh turned instinctively to Grace, whose light, airy motions in the dance they had occasionally found time to admire.

Luke caught the look. "O, I forgot—of course *you* waltz. Do join sis, won't you? I'll do the music—she's taught me it," and he began humming an air so inspiriting that it added to the already wild desire to see the dance.

Waltzing had not yet penetrated to that remote region, though many had heard of it, and an eager chorus echoed Luke's entreaty, Miss Carver evidently was ready to do her part, and Grace yielded though much against her will, not liking to disappoint the whole company by a refusal which would certainly be imputed to pride or unwillingness to oblige. Luke

did the music to perfection, and the spectators watched with delightful admiration every movement of the two graceful figures. Grace, accustomed to dancing from her childhood, though latterly she had not had much practice, would have been pronounced a perfect waltzer by competent critics; and her companion, if she had not profited much in other respects by her year's "finishing" in Philadelphia, certainly did credit to the dancing-master, whom unknown to her father she had patronized. A loud shout of applause testified the pleasure they had given. Then followed a discussion on the dance itself, about which there were two opinions, though as to the style of its performance all were agreed that it couldn't be excelled.

"Yes, it's a pretty dance for two young gals, I'll not dispute that," said old farmer Blake. "I've heard that it's very pop'lar among town folks, but I hope they don't dance it men and women together, like other dances. Gracious, I'd like to see our Susy going it in that fashion with any feller—guess I'd take her by the ear and lead her out of the ring pretty quick.

The two waltzers exchanged a smile at the honest farmer's indignation, wondering what he would have thought of the polka.

And so the "exercises" of the festive evening were appropriately closed.

The school teacher would not have dreamed that her

performances at the old homestead—waltzing and all, would work a revolution in the popular feeling of Springland in her favor. Yet so it turned out. The fame of her biscuits and of the extraordinary way she "fixed things," spread far and near, and the most cynical Springlander took pride in the thought that she *belonged to them*. And as for the waltzing, which Grace, on thinking the matter over, felt sure would procure her instant dismissal in dire disgrace, even those who considered dancing the unpardonable sin, confessed to being "tickled at the idea that it was two of the Springland gals that took down all the rest." To be sure the fact of brother Carver's daughter being her fellow sinner, went far in Grace's favor. That young lady who prided herself on her waltzing, felt more friendly disposed towards one who had enabled her to show off her accomplishments. Luke was in raptures; the father, while affecting to be indignant was secretly pleased, and thus some of the most influential members of society led the change in public opinion which amazed as much as it gratified its object. They even forgave her for being a Papist! Ah! a wonderful institution is public opinion!

CHAPTER XVII.

The Prodigal's Return.

"Yes, fair as the siren, but false as her song,
The world's painted shadows that lure us along;
Like the mist on the mountain, the foam on the deep,
Or the voices of friends that we greet in our sleep,
Are the pleasures of earth, and I mourn that to heaven
I gave not the heart which to folly was given."

"Two more passengers! Wonder how many more
he means to stow into this rickety concern—'twill be
breaking down the next thing as sure's fate."

The six other occupants of the stage coach *looked* the annoyance which a growling old gentleman had vented in words, no one evincing the slightest inclination to make room for the new comers, when the driver was pressing into his vehicle with the stereotyped assurance that there was plenty of room. "Make room there ladies and gentlemen, if you please; there's room for nine inside, and there's only seven of you as I can see."

And very ungraciously bundles and carpets were taken upon the laps of their respective owners, and room made on the middle seat for the intruders with a manner that said plainly "we don't thank you for coming." Yet one would have thought that a single glance at the two so ungraciously admitted would have

secured them a kinder reception; they were so young, so bright looking, so full of life and spirits, it seemed as if the veriest churl would have felt the bright influence of their presence. One at least of their fellow passenger seemed to yield to the charm, for after a few minutes he courteously offered to change places with the lady. She as politely declined, perceiving that he was an invalid, and knowing that travel-worn and weary and dissatisfied as he evidently was, he would feel all the discomforts of the middle seat, which she, happy young thing, full of health and gayety, scarcely heeded.

The young man—almost deathly he looked in the half-twilight of the coach, and with his large black eyes and jetty hair contrasting so strikingly with the pallor of his countenance—leaned back in his corner watching the pair with a sort of listless interest, perhaps with envy. The one was a glad bright creature of seventeen, with eyes of the deep soft blue of the violet, and long golden curls framing as sweet a face as ever artist would desire for a representation of youthful loveliness, innocence and joy. The lad by her side, taller, though apparently her junior, had eyes of the same violet hue, hair like hers, soft, rich and golden waving around his high open brow; but while her countenance was sparkling and gay as a happy child's, his had an expression of deeper thoughtfulness, of

high and holy aspirations, that would have won for him, boy as he was, the instinctive respect and confidence of observant beholders. They chatted gaily of school-times and school-mates, and from an occasional remark their fellow traveller gathered that the young lady was now returning home after finishing her education, that her brother had obtained a holiday in order to be her escort, that they had still a considerable distance to travel, and that she was all impatience to reach her home—"dear old home!" as she called it with a pretty air of girlish enthusiasm.

"Willie," said she eagerly, "if we reach the city in time, let us take the night train."

He shook his head smilingly.

"Do, that's a dear, good boy," she pleaded coaxingly. "Think how much it will shorten our journey."

"By how many miles, do you think?" he asked quizzingly.

"By ten or twelve *hours*, you tease," she answered with a pretty pout. "Don't we usually reckon the length of a railroad journey by the hours, not the miles? Do let us go forward to-night," her affectation of anger changing to the winning air of a spoiled child.

"Do you forget all Sister Cecilia's warnings and directions about the care I am expected to take of my precious charge?" asked the brother laughing. "A

pretty care-taking it would be to let you travel all night by railroad after a day's jolting in stage coaches."

"The stage we were in this morning didn't jolt a bit,—at least I did not feel it."

"This one makes amends—if it doesn't jolt us into the road presently, we may think ourselves fortunate."

"Well, if I do not feel tired—as I am sure I shall not, by the time we reach ———, will you consent to go straight through?" she asked returning to the charge. "Yes, I know you will; you are as anxious to see dear mamma as I am, and won't she be surprised to see us to-morrow evening?"

The little beauty clapped her hands joyously, but a whispered reminder from Willie that she was attracting the attention of all the passengers, she blushed rosily and turned a deprecating glance on the pale invalid opposite, as if fearing that her chatter had disturbed him. But he was no longer paying any attention to her; tired and irritated, he had drawn his hat low over his face and seemed inclined to forget the discomforts of the journey in sleep. Sleep, however, was impossible, for the lumbering old vehicle shook and tumbled about at an alarming rate, and presently a jolt worse than all the preceding ones, shook the passengers from their "propriety," and precipitated the blue-eyed girl into his arms. A faint smile broke

over his wan features as he restored the blushing girl to her place.

"Our old coach will not stand many such jolts as that, I fear," said he to the youth.

"I have been expecting an upset for the last half hour. I hope it will not occur while we are descending this steep hill; luckily we are almost to the bottom."

Scarcely were the words spoken when with a crash like the fall of a great tree, over went the vehicle, dashing its occupants on the ground. There were loud exclamations of terror, but when each in succession had scrambled out from the wreck, it seemed as if with the exception of slight scratches and bruises, no injury had been sustained. But one was missing.

"The sick gentleman—where is he?" asked the young girl.

But already her brother had discovered him, and was running down the hill at the foot of which lay a prostrate, apparently lifeless form. In a moment the driver and the least selfish among the passengers were on the spot.

"He is not dead," said Willie, and the girl gave a long sigh of relief.

"No, but he's just the same thing," said the driver mournfully, examining the injured man from whose mouth a small stream of blood was slowly trickling,

with the critical eye of one accustomed to accidents. "That throw has hurt his lungs, belike, and what with that and like enough some other injuries, and he being poorly enough before, to judge by his looks, I should say he's about done for."

The young girl shivered, and looked anxiously at the poor sufferer, as if fearful of the effect of this remark, but he was wholly unconscious; a faint moan at intervals being the only token that life remained. Willie and the driver exchanged a few words in low tones; then the latter turned his attention to the other passengers who were bewailing the dilapidated condition of their baggage, and impatiently demanding what was to be done. He pointed down the road. About a mile distant was a small public house; thither some of the passengers immediately proceeded, others remaining to guard their baggage, while the driver galloped off at full speed to obtain assistance. The brother and sister remained alone with the helpless traveller, whose condition awakened all the generous compassion of those young unselfish hearts.

"Can we do nothing for him?" murmured the gentle girl. "O Willie, it is dreadful to see him lying here, dying perhaps, and nothing done for him."

"Be patient, dear Jennie, help will arrive before long."

"But he may die meantime, he scarcely breathes," and the starry eyes were dimmed with tears.

The youth glanced at a stream of water flowing a few paces distant. He had at first started towards it, but checked himself. "It would, perhaps, be easy to restore consciousness," he said doubtfully, "but I think it is better not to try just yet."

She looked up with an expression of half reproachful surprise. To her this suspension of life's faculties seemed so terrible, she could not think that her brother would neglect for a moment any chance of restoration. He replied to her mute inquiry.

"The flow of blood has partly ceased, but I fear that with the first return of consciousness he may make some exertion that will bring it on again. You can see how even that faint moan threatens to renew it."

"Dear Willie, you are always so thoughtful," murmured the sister fondly. "But he looks as if he is dying, and—O Willie! perhaps not prepared, and alas! we can do nothing."

"Yes we can help him by our prayers, Jennie," said Willie with soothing gentleness. "And see," he added as he looked down the road, "there is help arriving, and now, pray, pray fervently, Jennie, for great as you think his present danger, the first movement of that feeble form will increase it."

The lad's fears were partly realized. With the first attempt to raise the injured man to a litter, gently as it was done under the superintendence of the doctor, whom the stage driver had fortunately met on the road, the blood welled forth again, and Jennie, faint and trembling, covered her face with her hands, while from her heart arose a fervent petition for the soul which she deemed hovering on the verge of eternity. A touch upon her arm suddenly interrupted her prayer. She looked up and beheld the little procession moving quietly and carefully on with their burden, and Willie drawing her arm within his, led her slowly onward.

"Is he—" she could not proceed in her faltering question, but her companion understood and answered her with a cheering—"No, Jennie dear, he is not dead," and with a murmured ejaculation of thankfulness hoping for the best, yet fearing the worst, the two moved silently and sadly forward.

Their anxiety was not lessened by the report of the physician, when, on arriving at the tavern, he was able to make a closer examination into his patient's condition. "His life hangs by a thread, there is not one chance in a hundred of his recovery," said the doctor with an oracular shake of the head, which gave double force to his discouraging words. "If he was at home he would stand a better chance, good nursing in these cases is all important—by the way, his trunk

should be examined that his relatives may be notified of his condition without delay. No one here knows anything about him or where he belongs, and he will not soon if ever, be able to give any information himself. It were well to attend to this immediately—I will look in in the course of an hour or two to see how he gets on.”

“These papers which fell from his pocket will probably give us all the information necessary,” said Willie, opening a little package as soon as the doctor had left, and glancing hastily over its contents. He was interrupted by a cry of joy from his sister, who had opened one of the papers.

“Alfred Morton! Why, Willie, it must be the brother of our dear Grace! Look, this is a receipt for his passage money from Havre. Oh, you needn’t search any farther, it is he—I know it is!”

“Yes, there cannot be a doubt of it,” said her brother, for this old passport corresponds exactly with the description Angela gave us of him.

“And it is dated almost four years ago,—just about the time Alfred went to Europe,” resumed the excited girl. “Oh, how good is our Lord, to order it so that we would meet him in that stage-coach! Poor Grace might else never learn anything about her brother.

As if one impulse prompted them, the two stole softly into the adjoining room, and gazed long and earnestly

on the invalid who now slept heavily from the effects of an anodyne administered by the doctor; then as softly crept away to consult on what was best to be done. It had seemed hard even while he was yet unknown to them, to leave the poor sufferer to the care of the people of the tavern, but now such a thing was not to be thought of. They decided to remain until they should hear from their mother, to whom Willie wrote a hasty account of what had occurred, that she might communicate it to Grace as she thought best.

“Dear old Oakdale!” exclaimed Jennie, looking lovingly at the superscription of the letter. “If we only had him there, I am certain he would recover—mamma would know just what to do.”

“I expect she will come on immediately with Grace,” said Willie.

“O that would be nice—I do hope she will, and that he will be better before they come; it would be very distressing to his sister to see him as he looks now.”

“Under your care he cannot fail to improve,” said the brother wishing to rally her from her dejection.

She looked up archly, a smile breaking through the light shade of sadness that rested on her fair young face. “You need not laugh, brother, I am not so inexperienced in taking care of the sick as you may imagine. Many an hour I spent in the infirmary help-

ing Sister Ursula with her various duties. Good, kind soul! I wish we had her here. She must have a particular talent for taking care of the sick, she takes so much pleasure in it, and is so successful."

Several days went by. The physician grew more hopeful, as the danger of hemorrhage which he at first greatly apprehended, seemed passed; still the patient's condition was one of great weakness and suffering.

"There is but one thing to be dreaded now, I think," said the doctor to the two young nurses, whose intelligence, kindness and perseverance he much admired. "Should fever set in I am afraid—very much afraid, that he will sink under it. But if we can stave off this danger I have every hope of his recovery, though the case will be a tedious one, for his injuries are very severe."

Cheered and encouraged by this opinion, the brother and sister redoubled their watchful care of their charge, while they anxiously awaited an answer to their letter. But when a week passed without bringing any, they could no longer endure the suspense, and Willie set out for Oakdale, promising to write immediately on his arrival there. Jennie watched his departure with a sigh, thinking how great had lately been her impatience to reach home. Her girlish dreams of the pleasant time she would have on leaving school had suddenly been interrupted, and their fulfilment

was indefinitely postponed; but she quickly checked any natural feelings of regret, or of shrinking from what she felt to be a duty of friendship.

Her task was far from an easy one. The invalid was selfish, irritable and capricious. His young nurse found her most strenuous exertions to please him mostly unsuccessful, yet he could not endure to have any one else wait on him. He scowled at the entrance of any of the family, especially of the well-meaning but fussy landlady, who always insisted on shaking up his pillows and giving an extra smoothing to the bed-clothes, and on taking leave would express a firm conviction that in a few days he would be as well as ever, which irritated him so much that he longed for strength enough to throw the pillows at her and see if that would teach her to keep away from him. All Jennie's patience and tact were called into exercise under circumstances so trying. She found that the experience gained in the infirmary of the convent as volunteer assistant to Sister Ursula, was far from qualifying her for this position, where she felt a great responsibility resting upon her. She mentioned her fears to the physician, who immediately ordered (as indeed he had frequently done before) that his patient should be kept perfectly quiet, free from all exciting or irritating influences; his condition was very critical, and the danger of fever being imminent, it was all important to keep his mind

in perfect tranquillity. These orders from the doctor had their effect with some of the inquiries ; others more persevering and less endowed with common sense, gave no heed to his orders or to Jennie's earnest expostulations. As for the landlady, " no doctor, she averred, was going to hinder her from doing her duty to one of her lodgers." So Jennie, harassed and troubled by this ignorant pertinacity, could only strive to make the intrusive visits as brief as possible, and after they were ended, exert all her powers of pleasing to calm the invalid's excitement, and turn his thoughts immediately to more pleasant subjects. She related amusing or pathetic anecdotes of her school-life, sang sweet and soothing hymns, read to him by the hour, or repeated the various legends she had heard from the nuns. Sometimes her efforts to amuse or please her impatient charge were more successful than she had ventured to hope ; more frequently they failed altogether, but though a little disheartened at such times, she never thought of giving up. She was acting not only from the promptings of a kind nature, but in obedience to the dictates of charity ; and knowing that in serving her fellow-creature in a right spirit, she was ministering to Him who vouchsafes to call all men his brethren, and to consider as done for Himself what is done for them, her kindness was as faithful and persevering as it was generous.

Willie's promised letter arrived in due season. His mother had not received the one he wrote to her, and on reaching Oakdale he had found her in no little anxiety regarding her young travellers whom she had been for several days expecting. She fully approved of the course they had pursued, and would start immediately to W——, to apprise Grace of what had taken place, and accompany her to the scene of the catastrophe.

Jennie glanced at the date of the letter. " By this time they have surely reached W——," she mused, " and of course Grace will lose no time in setting out—by the last of the week, therefore, they will be here. How glad I shall be, for the poor invalid himself, much more than on my own account, Mamma will be able to keep officious visitors out of the room, if she thinks proper to do so."

Animated by this hope, she continued to perform her duties to the patient with increased energy and faithfulness, but in spite of all her vigilance, that which she had most dreaded came to pass. One evening Alfred was unusually morose and gloomy ; all her efforts to enliven or sooth him proved unavailing, and before morning he was in a high fever. The doctor's anger and disappointment were extreme. He had thought him in a fair way of recovery at his previous visit ; now all his work was undone, and he had scarcely a hope of a favorable termination. No one could account

for the sudden change, and poor Jennie, unconscious of any neglect, yet tormented by the fear that she was in some manner accountable for it, longed and prayed more fervently than ever for the arrival of those who would relieve her of her weighty responsibility. The doctor had previously predicted a reaction in his feeble patient from the unlooked for arrival of his sister, but when she came he was no longer capable of being benefited by a joyful surprise; Grace, who from Willie's account had hoped to find her brother convalescent, and whose heart was throbbing with joy and thankfulness for his return, was sadly grieved as she bent over the unconscious invalid, trying to recognize in those altered features the bright, handsome youth of four years ago. The deep fever red burned on his then haggard cheeks, the half closed eyes had a vacant glare, and from the parched, inflamed lips burst forth almost constantly delirious mutterings, showing the terrible power of the disease that had fastened upon the enfeebled system.

And day after day went by, and still those wild ravings were heard, and still no glance of returning reason was turned upon any of those anxious watchers. Ah! it was well then for Grace that she could cling with unshaken love and faith to that mighty hand which upholds the universe, and yet is ever stretched forth with fatherly compassion to support the weak and

tottering child of affliction. As she watched beside the sufferer, holding his burning hands in hers, tenderly bathing the throbbing brow, and watching—oh! how eagerly!—for the paling of those fever fires that lit up cheek and eye so fearfully, there were times when hope seemed but a mockery, and a feeling of utter desolation, of despairing loneliness came over her. He was her all on earth; true they had been long parted, but she had ever hoped even against hope that at some happy time they would be re-united. And now—how could she give him up?—how could she see him taken from her fond arms to the cold, dark grave?—and oh! agony of agonies! must that soul so dear depart from its frail tenement of clay all unprepared for the dread change—knowing nothing, caring nothing for the great hereafter?

With burning tears she poured out her anguished soul to Him “with whom are the issues of life and death,” beseeching Him in that adorable name to which nothing is denied, for the life—but much more for the conversion—of one so dear. And there were hearts only less anxious than hers, that joined in her petitions; still trusting unreservedly in One mighty to save, though every morn and evening the doctor's face grew graver and his ominous shake of the head more discouraging. Was it those trusting prayers that stayed the course of the death-angel, and turned the shadow

of his wing away from the form over which it had so long fluttered! For an hour came in which the doctor's face brightened, and his tones were sweet as a seraph's to those eager listeners as he whispered cheerfully:

"*There is hope!* If this quiet slumber lasts through the night, he will be perfectly rational when he awakes."

More anxiously prayed the watchers, deeper and deeper grew the solemn hush of expectancy as the night slowly waned—the night on which so much depended—the labored breathing grew lighter and more regular, and at daybreak the closed lids were unsealed, and Alfred gazed wonderingly at the anxious faces that bent over him. A smile of recognition played over his wasted features as he held out his hand to his sister; hope was merged with a blissful certainty; reason had resumed its throne, the death shadows were banished. Yes, hold back thy swelling emotions, loving sister! content thee with that one fond embrace ere friendship prudently interferes to withdraw thee from that couch over which thou shalt watch no more in anguish, but with joy and gratitude.

Mrs. Althorpe had thought it best to detain her son until the crisis was passed; now as the doctor pronounced his patient out of danger, Willie returned to college, his mother and sister remaining to assist Grace in the arduous duties attendant on a conva-

lescence which would probably be tedious. The invalid's unhappy frame of mind retarded his improvement. It was that in proportion as the prospect of his recovery grew more certain, his spirits became more depressed; the cheering prognostications of doctor and nurses only increasing his irritability and moroseness, Grace vainly sought to discover the cause of his gloom and arouse him from it. Jennie's efforts to enliven him only added to his dejection, which was the more remarkable as it was plain that of his three faithful attendants she was the favorite. His eye would follow her every movement, and the smile with which he sometimes answered her sportive sallies was as bright as her own; but the next moment the shadow would deepen on his brow as with a sigh he turned from her and relapsed into moody silence. Mrs. Althorpe determined to ascertain what was preying upon his mind.

One night when she found him unusually disturbed she began to speak in a kind friendly way of the danger in which he had lately been, reminding him of the gratitude he owed to the tender Father who had snatched him as it were from the jaws of death and given him a new lease of life.

He interrupted her with passionate vehemence. "Life—what is it to me now? I would a thousand times rather die than live."

"You do not reflect on what you say, my child," said his kind friend, as with soothing gentleness she passed her hand across the brow that began to work and throb with sudden pain. "Life and health are blessings for which none of us can be sufficiently thankful to the merciful Giver."

"Thankful!" he repeated with bitter emphasis. "But perhaps you do not know what a cheering prospect lies before me—nay, I am sure if you did you would not speak such words to a poor wretch to whom they seem like mockery. *A helpless cripple for life*—that is my doom! Do not tell me that *such* a recovery is a boon to be thankful for."

And then as though the utterance of his haunting fears had utterly unmanned him, he burst into a passion of tears, as in answer to the question of his surprised auditor he brokenly related how, while pretending to be asleep on one occasion, when the landlady brought one of her cronies to see him, he had heard their whispered conversation by his bed, and how one sentence from each had burned itself into his brain. "Poor fellow, to think of his being a cripple for the rest of his days—and he so young, too, I should think he'd a sight rather die." This was said by the crony in a tone of dreary compassion, and the landlady answered. "Yes, 'tis a great pity, but that's what the doctor told my man when this first happened. Says

he, the young man may live, but if he does he will be a helpless cripple for life!"

"My poor child!" said Mrs. Althorpe tenderly as he wailed rather than spoke the words which had sounded more terrible than the doom of death to his shuddering ears, "My poor Alfred, what you must have suffered."

"O, you do not know—you can never think how that terrible sentence rings in my ears day and night. A helpless cripple! Sometimes I think it will drive me mad. That was what brought on the fever," he added hurriedly, seeming to find relief in speaking of what he had so long brooded over in gloomy silence. "I hoped it would I longed for death; I prayed—oh how I prayed that I might die, but oh my prayer was not heard."

"Alas for us if all our wild wishes and prayers were answered," said Mrs. Althorpe in a tone of pitying kindness. "But, my dear, I think you have been needlessly troubled. Those persons were doubtless mistaken."

What a wild glance was turned to her. She answered it in a yet more confident tone. "I am sure they were. If the doctor had such a fear he would certainly have mentioned it to my son or daughter."

"Do you think so? O lady do you really think so?" His eyes were raised to hers with a child-like beseech-

ingness, and he awaited her reply as if more than life or death hung on her words.

"I really do, Alfred. As he did not speak of it to them, nor to your sister or myself since we came, I am persuaded it was all a mistake."

He seized her hand and pressed it to his lips with a wild fervor of gratitude. "God bless you for the hope you have given me. O, dear madam, you can never know how that thought has haunted me—how I have shrunk from the doctor's cheerful 'we will soon have you well again.' While you have all been rejoicing that my life was spared, life has seemed to me not a blessing, but a curse."

He was silent for a time, seemingly wrapt in reflections which Mrs. Althorpe did not think proper to interrupt. When with an appealing look, while a slight flush mounted his pallid cheeks, he said hesitatingly, "I have been very wicked, have I not? Won't you pray for me? God will hear *your* prayers."

"And so He will yours, my dear boy. Fail not to profit by His holy grace which is now urging you to repentance. Let us thank Him for your recovery and beg Him to enable you to spend the life He has given in His service."

The pious lady took her prayer-book from the table as she spoke, and kneeling by his side read the beautiful "litany of Jesus" with sweet, impressive fervor. Much

to her surprise Alfred joined in the responses, and when she had finished and was considering what would be most suitable to read next, he took the prayer-book from her hands and turning over the leaves until he came to the "litany of Loretto," asked her to read it for him. She complied, he answering the various petitions as readily as before, and soon after the prayer was ended, he fell into a quiet, refreshing slumber such as he had not hitherto enjoyed.

In the morning his evident improvement was a source of fresh rejoicing in which he was now willing to join, for the doctor's words confirmed Mrs. Althorpe's cheering assurance. Very indignant was the old gentleman at the idle gossips that had so nearly caused his patient's death.

"Oh these women—these women, they're always at the bottom of every mischief," he exclaimed quite forgetful of his usual sedate deportment. "Never saw one yet that wouldn't make a mountain out of a mole-hill."

The patient as well as the ladies were amused by the worthy physician's indignation, and by his chagrin when he found that the "women" were innocent of the exaggeration. It appeared that the landlord on first hearing of the accident, and seeing his helpless guest had said—"shouldn't wonder if the poor fellow's crippled for life, don't you think so, doctor?" and re-

garding the doctor's non-committal reply, "I hope not, though his injuries are very severe," as "professional humbuggery" adhered to his own opinion, and left those to whom he expressed it under the impression that it was also the physician's.

"All the same, ma'am," said the doctor, testily, breaking in upon the landlady's vehement self-justification. "If you didn't invent, you repeated the nonsense—worked the mischief all the same—may be thankful that you haven't a death on your conscience!" and he took a huge pinch of snuff, and closed his box with a sharp click that gave emphasis to his words.

Relieved from the torturing apprehension that had embittered his every hour, Alfred no longer refused to be "entertained;" he was now as talkative as he had previously been taciturn, and seemed quite indifferent to the pain he still endured. That evening when the ladies were as usually pleasantly chatting on such subjects as they thought would interest the invalid, and delighting in the cheerfulness with which he chimed in by an occasional remark, he suddenly cast an arch glance at Mrs. Althorpe, and asked if he hadn't greatly surprised her on the previous night.

"Indeed you did," was the smiling reply, "so much so that I am afraid I should have been impolite enough to ask questions, had you not seemed inclined to sleep."

Alfred laughed with boyish merriment, laughed all the more heartily as he saw that the curiosity of the young ladies was excited by an allusion which Jennie pronounced quite mysterious.

"I have laughed to myself more than once to-day as I tried to imagine how great must have been your astonishment when one whom you considered a Protestant—or, perhaps more properly speaking, a Nothingarian—asked you to pray to the Blessed Virgin in his behalf."

Grace started up—her face illumined with the ecstatic hope which she secretly dared to entertain, while Mrs. Althorpe and Jennie waited in breathless impatience for what was to come next.

"Well, I'm waiting to be catechised—Grace, why don't you speak?" and he turned teasingly to his sister who cried out breathlessly—

"Dear, dear Alfred! I am afraid to believe—can it really be that you—"

"Have become a Catholic, is not that the question you are stammering over, sis?" said he with provoking slowness. "Why I suppose I must say yes, seeing that I was converted in Italy, but I fear that I have since fallen from grace, as our friends the Methodists would say. Come, sis, don't quite smother me with kisses—I'm not as willing to bid farewell to this sinful world as I was twenty-four hours ago."

"Oh, I am so happy!" cried Grace, bright tears flashing down her cheeks, "God has granted my prayer, now I have nothing farther to wish for."

"I think you have, Gracie," said her brother, trying to keep up his gay tone, though the emotion of the happy trio before him was very contagious, "I begin to think the work of conversion has all to be done over again. Wonder what my fine old father confessor at the other side of the herring-pond would say if he knew of my backsliding."

"Alf, you are certainly getting well," said Grace laughing a little nervously "You are just as wild and reckless as ever."

"Hav'n't I just acknowledged that I have fallen back into my evil ways?"

"Well, you needn't proclaim it so openly. Our friends will be shocked at your levity."

"Not in the least," rejoined Mrs. Althorpe, "for now that we are aware he is one of *us*, we know how to make him behave himself. If I had been aware of it all along, I would have had something to say to you before this, my dear fellow."

Alfred laughingly begged that she would not be too severe, as he was really going to try to be good." But let me tell you—for I know you are all dying to hear how I became a Catholic.

"Is was—let me see, six months ago or thereabouts, that on entering one of the prettiest towns of southern Italy, my careless *Vetturino* contrived to upset his clumsy vehicle, and its only occupant—myself—upon the rough road. By the way I must be one of those reprobates whom the old hymn tells of as growing hardened in their crimes, for 'tis only when I am brought to death's door by some frightful catastrophe that I take a *religious turn*. Well, there was I, a stranger in a strange land, knowing not a creature in the place, having a very imperfect knowledge of the language, and a *mighty scant* lining to my purse; altogether my situation was more romantic than agreeable. No need to look so wo-begone, young ladies, nor hug up to each other so sympathetically," he added with a merry glance at his sister and Jennie; "for as you see I have survived all the horrors of my situation. The "moral reflections" which have touched your gentle hearts were but an after thought, for at the time I was most kindly spared the necessity of thinking for myself. Of course you have all heard of that noble order of charity—one of the many peculiar to benighted Italy—comprising all the ranks, from the grand duke to the laborer, whose duty it is to take charge of strangers suffering from illness or accident, leaving their occupation, amusement or whatever they may be engaged in at the sound of the warning bell, and re-

pairing in disguise to the spot where their services are needed, doing their good work in secret for their "Father in heaven" who will one day "reward them openly." Some of these good Samaritans conveyed me to their hospital, where I was nursed and tended with a tenderness no words could ever describe. I cannot say more than that it corresponded with that which I have experienced during my present illness. But my hospital attendants were not as delicately reserved on the subject of religion as my charming lady nurses."

"Come, come, Alfred, that is not fair," interrupted Mrs. Althorpe, good humoredly. "You do well to remind us of our sins of omission."

"But I will do better by remembering my own sins of commission," he interrupted in his turn. "In truth I know that I am not a docile patient, and the danger of putting a perverse fellow like me into a fever is one not to be incurred lightly. But the good brothers at the hospital had no such gentle fears. Accustomed, I suppose, while taking due care of the body, to regard its well being as vastly inferior to the interests of the soul, they delayed not to speak of the one thing necessary through any fear of agitating or alarming their interesting patient. 'Tis true I was in no danger of death, I had a broken arm and some bruises which were more painful than dangerous, and as my case

was a very tedious one, (as it is likely to be now,) my spiritual physicians had full leisure to attend to my soul, and initiate me into all the theories of the faith, and what was not quite so pleasant, (here Alfred made a grimace of affected terror), into its practices likewise—*confession* and all. They were quite proud of their convert, Gracie; you wouldn't believe how pious your scape-grace brother got to be—having no temptation you see, to be otherwise. Really, I don't wonder that in such places men become saints. Where everything and every person is working harmoniously to the one great end, and if aught disagreeable is to be done or to be suffered, it is offered up in the same spirit of enlightened piety—nothing shrunk from because it is too great, or contemned because it is too little—all the best and noblest qualities of our nature called into daily, hourly action, and the bad ones dying out gradually for want of exercise,—positively one can hardly help learning the great science of the saints. In fact," he added resuming his careless tone, "I flattered myself that I was acquiring it pretty fast, considering I was but a tyro—"

"Alfred! Alfred! will nothing ever sober you?" interrupted Grace, affecting a shocked tone, while Jennie and her mother laughed heartily. "I should think that if neither your travels nor your sufferings could steady you, your long residence in that heavenly place might have done so."

"And how, I pray you, my good sister? For the place being as you truly say, heavenly, was just as pleasant as you can well imagine; plenty of fun, plenty ways to pass away the time, when I didn't find it slow you may bet that it wasn't. And as for the holy fathers and the good brothers of the establishment, there wasn't a long face among them. They were just the sort of people one likes to meet with, the sort to carry sunshine into a sick room—in fact they were what I would have called in my rude school-boy days jolly, though serious enough, of course, on proper occasions. Bah! how I hate your long-faced, sanctimonious hypocrites like that old codger—hem, old gentleman I mean, we used to call Uncle Althorpe. Do you remember how vexed I used to be with his solemn ways?"

"Never mind about him now," said Grace hurriedly. "You were speaking of religious people and as he was not one, he will not serve for an illustration."

"Wasn't he? Why I always thought he was *very* sanctified, and that that was what made him such a muff. Oh! I say, Gracie, how do those people come on who took possession of what should have been ours?" he asked eagerly, wholly unconscious that his words applied to two of his hearers.

Jennie blushed scarlet and looked timidly at her mother who preserved her former manner, as the uncon-

scious Alfred went on regardless of his sister's endeavor to turn his thoughts into another channel.

"I suppose they are still at Oakdale. Well, well! they are welcome to it so far as I am concerned," he said smilingly. "I believe I should have turned out a great scamp if I had inherited the wealth I expected. As for that widow and her family—pshaw, Gracie! why do you keep interrupting me? I suppose my naming the people is not going to harm them!" he exclaimed so pettishly that Mrs. Althorpe laughed outright, as she made a merry comment on Grace's unusual rudeness, taking the opportunity to give her a warning glance.

Alfred, forgetting his momentary vexation, laughed also, and looking fondly at his distressed sister, rejoined that he did not like to say she was rude, but she certainly acted very strangely. "But I know how 'tis, Gracie, you think by this time I should have got over my resentment against those people. Isn't that it, sis?"

Poor Grace was painfully embarrassed. "Why don't you go on with your story that interests us all, Alfred, dear, instead of troubling yourself about a matter that doesn't concern us?"

"But it doesn't trouble me much now, since I've learned to forgive those Althorpe's, for I had to forgive them, you know, though 'twas a pretty tough job, you

may be sure," he said with an attempt at his former gaiety. "But probably you still think as you used to try to convince me, that they did us no injury. Are you still of that opinion, sis? Come, you needn't be afraid to answer—I promise you not to have a relapse of fever, no matter what you say."

"Spoiled boy!" said Grace, playing with the luxuriant masses of hair that curled in rich disorder about his head. I think you will need the services of a barber."

"That is not answering my question, Grace. I say do you still persist in thinking that we have not received injuries from these people?"

"I do indeed, Alfred," she replied finding that he was not to be put off. "The injury you speak of existed only in imagination—the benefits they conferred on us were real, and much more than could have been expected," she added with feeling as she thought of the kindness of the whole family at this juncture.

What was there in her words that brought a deep burning blush to his face, and made the large eyes that had been turned on hers with so merry an expression drop suddenly with a painful feeling of humiliation? Grace and Jennie in mute bewilderment looked at each other and then at Mrs. Althorpe. She, who alone knew what a humiliating recollection Grace had unknowingly awakened, hastened to prepare a re-

"freshing drink for the invalid in order to put an end to the painful subject. But Grace, perceiving tears trembling on his long lashes, with a keen pang of regret for her thoughtlessness, threw her arms around him, mingling her tears with his.

"Dear, darling brother! I did not mean to give you pain. What was there so shocking in your going off to Europe? I can see now that our Lord ordered it all for the best, for if you had not gone, perhaps you would never have been led to the true Faith."

"No, sister," he said in mournful accents. "God was pleased to bring good out of evil in my regard, but that does not excuse or justify me."

"But you did no harm, Alfred," persisted Grace. "You were not the first boy that ran off from college, and you had no parent or guardian to grieve by your thoughtlessness. I cannot see why you should reproach yourself so bitterly.

Alfred fixed his eyes steadfastly upon hers as if expecting there to see a meaning different from what her words implied, but her expression, frank though sorrowful, seemed to puzzle him. "Nay, sis, do not try to reconcile me to myself," he said as she was again about to speak. "Perhaps you do not remember *all* my delinquencies. Would that I could forget them also."

Mrs. Althorpe could no longer refrain from interposing. She felt the deepest pity for one who, as she could well understand, writhed under the harrowing remembrance of the dishonorable act connected with his going abroad ;" and her manner, as she gave him the draught she had prepared, was so full of motherly kindness that the poor youth—a boy yet in many respects, though he had reached the age of manhood—looked up at her with an involuntary glance of appeal as if she could comfort him. Her kind heart could not resist the plea. She stooped down as she laid his head gently back on the pillow, and kissed the brow on which the flush of shame still burned, as she said soothingly. "You must not give way too much to regret, my child. Unhappily we all, as we look back on our own past life, see much to regret. We recall many occasions on which we have acted so differently from what we would now do with our greater experience and altered feelings. The retrospection is salutary, but it must not be indulged if it tends to dishearten or discourage us."

"But there are things we cannot forget," said Alfred with a sigh.

"True, my dear, but we must bear the pain which the recollection gives us with patience, offering it to God in union with the sufferings of our blessed Redeemer in expiation of our sins. Our regret for past

errors is often a delusion of the enemy—always when it makes us melancholy or disquieted. Do not give way to such feelings. Having confessed all your boyish follies and faults, you have a right to trust in the mercy of God that the absolution you received blotted them out forever. The best way we can show our repentance for past errors is to avoid them in the future, and to atone for them as far as circumstances permit, having at least the will to do so if we have not the power."

"I have the will—alas! I know not when I will have the power," murmured Alfred.

"The intention suffices in the meantime, my dear Alfred, as you well know. So away with your gloom. Remember that true piety is always cheerful, as your Italian friends exemplified. And now you must tell us some more about them."

And Mrs. Althorpe contrived by persistent questions and remarks to lead his thoughts back to the hospital, and he was soon occupied with pleasant reminiscences connected therewith. He had much to tell of a gentleman attached to the French embassy who often visited the hospital to see a friend, and having some knowledge of English, was delighted to have an opportunity to acquire the proper pronunciation by chatting with Alfred. They spent some hours of each day very pleasantly together, and the pupil on being sud-

denly summoned home on important business, sent a farewell letter to his young teacher enclosing a munificent sum as a memento, by means of which Alfred was enabled to start for home as soon as his health was sufficiently restored. With the view of economizing, he took a steerage passage, and some of his fellow passengers having the typhus fever, he unfortunately caught the disease, and for some time it was doubtful whether he would ever see the land he was so impatient to reach: but "having as many lives as a cat," as he said gaily, "he was able to get on his feet by the time the ship cast anchor in New York," and disregarding the languor remaining from his severe illness, immediately set out for W——, to join his sister when the accident to the stage coach frustrated his plans.

Alfred's convalescence was more speedy than had been expected. In a short time he was able to sit up part of the day, and all the danger of a relapse being over, Mrs. Althorpe thought that now her attendance could be dispensed with. Grace was loth to see her kind friends depart, and the invalid still more so; but his evident disinclination to part with Jennie only made the prudent mother the more anxious to depart. She could see that his feelings were not unshared by her daughter, and though she felt a friendly interest in the young man, she was unwilling

to allow the attachment to ripen, until he had given some proofs of more stability of character than he had yet shown.

In the confidential conversations between the brother and sister after the departure of their friends, Grace was first made aware of the means by which Alfred had obtained the necessary funds for his travels. His occasional fits of despondency and self-upbraiding were now accounted for, and as she grieved over the discovery, her love and gratitude were immeasurably increased toward the noblewoman who had so generously kept his delinquency secret. Alfred was deeply touched by this proof of Mrs. Althorpe's kindness. How much greater would have been his surprise had he known that it was she who had hovered so unweariedly around his sick bed, anticipating his every wish, and taking no thought of the weariness herself or her daughter might endure in humoring his wayward fancies. His sister would gladly have enlightened him, but it had been Mrs. Althorpe's wish to remain *incog.* at first, from the fear of exciting the invalid by recalling unpleasant recollections, and afterward from delicate consideration for his feelings when she found how deeply he regretted the past.

By the time he had fully recovered, the same thoughtful friend had procured for him through

the village attorney a situation as secretary to a distinguished lawyer of Philadelphia, who would aid him in preparing for the bar, besides paying a liberal salary for the assistance which Alfred could give him in preparing some important works for the press. It was an offer too tempting to be declined, and Grace, though she felt the parting a new trial, was reconciled to it by her anxiety for his interests. He accompanied her to the village adjoining Oakdale, where they parted, he being unwilling to enter the old mansion until he had refunded the money he had so dishonorably obtained. Grace was the bearer of a letter from him to Mrs. Althorpe, expressing his firm purpose of doing this as soon as possible, as well as for his deep regret for the error into which his boyish impetuosity had led him, and his grateful sense of her kindness. Mrs. Althorpe, though she cared nothing for the matter in a pecuniary view, was much pleased with the tone of the letter, and encouraged Grace's hopes that all would be well with the writer from henceforth.

Grace yielded to the solicitations of her friends to remain at Oakdale. But after some time a Mrs. Horton established a boarding and day school in the village, and Grace became the teacher of music and drawing at a salary which would enable her to

assist her brother in his laudable purpose. It was a pleasant situation, allowing her frequent opportunities of intercourse with her friends, and Jennie became her pupil in music, to which study she was especially partial.

CHAPTER XIX.

A Glance at other Scenes.

"Lord, if on earth Thou hast a Church,
 And dost with fulness dwell therein,
 Let me not wander past the porch,
 And dwell forlorn in outer sin.—
 Wherever Thine appointed fold
 Doth, like the gates of morning, stand;
 And, flinging back its bars of gold;
 Show glimpses of the heavenly land—
 Oh! thither guide my wandering feet,
 And grant me sight and keep me strong."

Let us leave for a time the good old "Keystone State," and travel into the proud "Old Dominion," halting at one of those fine country seats that grace the vicinity of the queenly city of Richmond. The house is one of those stately, old-fashioned structures, with lofty halls, long picture galleries, and spacious apartments rich with polished floors, carved wainscoting, and antique furniture, that remain as memorials of the ancient times of America, recalling a thousand legends—grand, inspiring and poetic—of "the long ago." It stands on a sort of upland, and from the covered piazza that runs the whole length and breadth of the mansion, the eye takes in a varied prospect of field, forest and hill, with the spires of the

capital city rising proudly to the fair blue arch above, and the noble James river pouring its bright flood from the western hills, giving light and animation to the scene.

It was late in the springtime, that season of enchanting beauty in the South, when nature seems to run riot in the exuberance of her joy, and flings abroad her fairy gifts of bloom and fragrance with bewildering prodigality. There had been a heavy shower, but now the clouds were rolling back, showing glimpses of the soft azure through widening rifts and chasms; and soon the sun broke forth in all its glory, casting a magical splendor on the landscape which the passing shower had vivified into fresh life and beauty. The flowering vines that draped and festooned the marble pillars of the piazza, shook off the pearly rain drops, and scattered balmy odors on the breeze that sportively tossed to and fro the tangled foliage; while the sunbeams drifting in through the interstices, made fitful alternations of light and shade on the white sanded floor, and seemed trying to play hide and seek with a majestic figure that paced up and down, now and then pausing as if unconsciously to cast a glance on the beautiful scene without, then resuming his measured walk with folded arms and head bent slightly, as if all its smiling charms were powerless to divert his mind from the preoccupation of unquiet thought. And yet that bright scene from which he turned so

wearily, might well have challenged the beholder's admiration.

The extensive grounds around the mansion were studded with forest trees—the maple, the oak and the beech, and fairest of all the tulip tree, gorgeous belle of the forest. The lawn fell with gentle declivities to the river bank, the grass growing wild and luxurious beneath the long shadow of the primeval trees, whose far-spreading roots formed many a cosy nook for sweet violets, daisies and wild geraniums. It stretched away on one side to a flower garden that was a very paradise of sweets; on the other lost itself in an extensive orchard, whose blossoming boughs looked in the distance like great masses of rubies and pearls. Far away until lost in the dim distance spread a lovely landscape, but the crowning charm of all was the noble river with its picturesque alternation of strife and calm; here pouring its bright waters around the emerald islets that gemmed the glittering current; there dashing impetuously over rocks that broke the sparkling waters into pearly foam; anon, flowing away in serene majesty to the sea, its peaceful surface dotted with swan-like steamers and skiffs spreading their white sails like a flock of silver winged birds to the sunshine and the breeze. Along the broken slopes of the bank, at the foot of the lawn, a few peach and plum trees drooped to the water's edge, their beautiful

blossoms like a thicket of red and white roses reflected in the limpid waves, and forming a fragrant canopy over a flight of rude steps cut in the soft, springy turf, that jutted out into the stream where a pleasure boat was moored, rocking softly on the murmuring tide. There was an indescribable air of comfort and repose about the old place, and the birds seemed to think it the sweetest spot they had met with on their travels, and to feel at home amid its wealth of shade; for every tree and bush had its gay plumaged tenants, flashing in and out from their leafy coverts like winged gems, circling joyously among flowery foliage and fruit blossoms, making the sunny air vocal with their blithesome lays and merry chirpings.

But insensible to all the fair sights and joyous sounds around his ancestral home, Powhattan Clifton walked wearily to and fro, reviewing his past life with a feeling of disappointment almost akin to loathing. Yet what had he, bright favorite of fame and fortune, to complain of? True, the sunshine of love had long since ceased to "lend life's wings its rosy hue," but he had sternly bade his heart forget its cherished dream; resolving to "let the dead past bury the dead," and to bear his bitter disappointment with the proud stoicism befitting his manhood. Henceforth fame should be the guiding star of his existence; he would scale the rugged heights; and, the lofty temple gained, would

look back with serene satisfaction, feeling that the purpose of his life was accomplished.

And he kept his resolution. Powhattan was not one to yield to sentimental repining over "a lost love," to parade "the wounds of his heart" before the gaping, sympathizing crowd in "elegiac" verses or eloquent prose. Neither did he affect the misanthropic, and inveighing bitterly on the fickleness of woman, swear eternal enmity against the sex. His nature was too intrinsically noble to stoop to such vagaries. When the first vehemence of indignation and grief had subsided, he thought of Grace with pity rather than resentment, as a victim to what he deemed fanaticism, and banishing vain regrets, gathered up all his energies to go forward in the career he had adopted. And success which might well have satisfied the most ambitious was his. Among the rising statesmen who were looked to take the places of those illustrious sages whose transcendent abilities and ardent patriotism had lifted up the young Republic to be a wonder among the nations, he stood pre-eminent: his name was already incised on that long list of "immortal names" which his native State—proud mother of heroes and statesmen—had given to the world.

He had twice been elected to Congress by the almost unanimous vote of his district, and such was the re-

putation he had won that on reaching the required age he was appointed to represent his State in the National Senate. In those days to be a member of the Senate of the United States was no small distinction, for that august body was regarded both at home and abroad with feelings of respect almost amounting to reverence. And the young Senator did credit to the discernment of the Legislature which had elected him. His splendid talents, lofty integrity, and enthusiastic zeal, marked him out, young as he was, as worthy of his exalted position, and even his political opponents were forced to admit that when the country counted her jewels he would be numbered amongst them. And his proud heart gloried in the success that had crowned his efforts, and when on returning home at the close of the first session, he heard the wild plaudits of his admiring fellow-citizens, and saw his revered parents exulting with tearful rapture in the triumph of the being whom they regarded as faultless, the cup of happiness seemed full, and for the moment he asked no more.

But had he indeed forgotten the sweeter, dearer hopes he had cherished ere ambition had become.

"The life of life,
Its purpose and its power!"

He himself could scarcely have told. So determinedly had he put away all the memories of that time—so entirely given himself up to the excitements, the hopes

and fears of political life, that if at times a thought of the past arose, it was but at the recollection half sweet, half mournful, of some pleasant dream vaguely remembered. In the courtly circles of Richmond and of Washington his fame, united to his rare personal attractions, rendered him the magnet to which bright eyes turned involuntarily; and his slightest attentions were received in a manner that would have flattered a vainer man or one given to harmless flirtations. But though enjoying the society of the fair and the gifted, his heart seemed proof against all their charms. Gentlemen said laughingly that his ambitious projects allowed him no time to fall in love; ladies pathetically declared that he must have had some unfortunate *affaire du coeur*. And Powhattan smiled when these sage opinions were repeated in his hearing, without troubling himself to contradict or endorse them. His father, whose every wish in his regard would be satisfied could he but see him happily married, often found occasion to sound the praise of some distinguished fair one, and to hint that he would be proud to receive her as his daughter.

His son united in the praise, but forbore to take the hints. And when his mother half seriously, half jestingly rallied him on the subject, he replied with that air of mingled gallantry and filial reverence he ever displayed towards his idolized parent, that "while

his dear mother made his home so pleasant, he felt no need of a wife."

It was not, then, baffled ambition nor the haunting memories of "love's young dream," that absorbed his mind on that glorious spring afternoon, rendering him heedless of everything but the train of thought started, he knew not how, and making him alike dissatisfied with the past and indifferent to the future. There are moments in the experience of perhaps every individual, when the soul suddenly awakening to a sense of its celestial origin and glorious destiny, feels almost irresistibly drawn toward the only Power mightier than itself, yet with whom it can claim kindred, and refuses any longer to satisfy its craving hunger with the dry husks of earth. Such a spell was now upon Powhattan Clifton. His aim in life had succeeded—how paltry and insignificant it appeared to him in that hour! The temple of fame was reached—could his spirit repose there with the supreme blissfulness he had promised himself? The excitement of struggle was over; the coveted prize won; was it the highest ambition of which that noble spirit, that heaven-gifted mind, was capable? And still unsatisfied he asked himself—"is this all!"

The sound of jocund voices broke in upon his gloomy reverie. He paused at the end of the piazza and looked out through its waving drapery upon the

beautiful flower garden beneath. Amid clustering plants and bushes he soon espied two "ebony forms" leisurely at work hoeing, weeding and thinning out the too luxuriant growth, pausing every other minute to take a survey of their work, talking and laughing the while. Old Jacques and his wife were the special proteges of the young Senator. They had been the favorite servants of an aged Catholic lady of Richmond who had brought them up very piously; and after her death they were inconsolable at the prospect of being removed to her grandson's distant plantation, where they would seldom if ever have an opportunity of attending to their religious duties. Powhattan had attended the sale of household goods with his mother, who wished to obtain some mementoes of the venerable deceased, and the lamentations which his first remark to the old servants brought forth touched a heart alive to all the generous impulses that ennoble humanity. It took him but a moment to make up his mind, and they were quickly raised to the height of felicity by learning that he had purchased them, and that their new home, if not within sound of the church-going bell like their former one, would be at least within a convenient distance of the city, where they could attend church regularly. From that day no happier beings existed than uncle Jacques and aunt Chloe. Their night of fear and grief was passed, and a bright morning had

dawned upon them. Bondage!—What was it to those two simple-hearted, fervent Christians whom "the Son of God had made free indeed?"

If they had a care on earth it was for the conversion of him who in their time of affliction had truly seemed to them, as aunt Chloe said, "like a bright angel of de bressed Lord," and their prayers for that purpose, if crude and rambling, were none the less sincere. Their young master was aware of the interest they felt in his spiritual concerns. He sometimes amused himself by getting Jacques to *argufy* on religious subjects, and once horrified him by expressing his skeptical opinions, curious to know how he would refute them. But the old man was too "struck" to begin a controversy. He shook his head slowly and gave his idolized master a look full of respect and pity.

"Yon can't blieve that, marster, you *can't* tink it no how. 'Pose ye die like dat dog thar, and be no more of ye? Ah, marster Pow'tan! old Jac, if him *is* a nigger wouldn't be satisfied to trow hisself 'way in dat fashum. Him specs to go some day to de Lord's own country, and lib thar foreber and eber wid all de holy 'postles, and martyrs and 'vangelises; and wid de Bressed Virgin, and all dat grand company, and wid de Lord hisself! Yes, old Jac wants to go dar, he *knows* it's his place. And marster Pow'tan tinks *him* hab no claim dar, in his Heabenly Fader's home—

tinks him got no Hebenly Fader no more'n poor Lion dar." And again the old man shook his head sorrowfully.

The simple words reached the master's heart. They had often recurred to him since, and now as he looked upon the old couple he *felt* that they had a treasure in comparison with which all his were as naught. He listened as aunt Chloe began to sing a favorite hymn, and as the two voices lingered on the words—

"What save my God above
Have I in heaven?"

the grace of God touched the skeptic's heart, the haughty lip quivered, the eagle glance was subdued, the proud form bent in humility before heaven—Jubilate ! The angels who rejoice in the conversion of a sinner draw near with holy messages to the awakened soul that now, like St. Paul, asks only what is required of it by Him whom it has so long denied. And still the sweet melody is wafted to heaven by those whom the Master of all has made instrumental in the accomplishment of this great work. Sing on, happy slaves ! happy in the possession of that divine Faith that sanctifies every condition of life. Ye have never been enlightened by those sublime maxims of a "progressive doctrine" that "the God of the slaveholder is not your God," and "the best passport to heaven would be the murder of your master !" Simple, happy creatures ! for you the Christianity taught eighteen centuries ago, suffices, without addition, reformation or improvement.

CHAPTER XX.

Conclusion.

"I see her: 'tis she of the ivory brow,
And heaven-tinged orbs ; I see her now."

* * * * *

"Not she—There's another more lovely still,
With a chastened heart and a tempered will."

It was the evening which closed the first year of Mrs. Horton's Academy. The large recitation room which was prettily adorned with wreaths of flowers, and with "specimens" of fancy needle work, drawing and painting, which had obtained premiums at the morning exhibition, was thronged with a brilliant crowd. In addition to the parents and friends of the pupils who had been present at the preceding exercises, there were a number of guests who had been invited to the social levee with which Mrs. Horton thought proper to close the scenes of the busy yet pleasant day. It was evident from the joyous looks of the young ladies and the satisfied complacency of those most particularly interested that the examination had been a complete success ; and now the musical performances of the pupils evinced as satisfactory a progress in that elegant accomplishment. The gem of the evening was one of Mozart's sublime compositions which was performed by the music teacher on the harp, accom-

panied on the piano by one of the pupils. The audience were rapt in breathless silence as the grand harmony, now pealing loudly through the lofty room, anon rippling softly as the murmur of a fountain, gushed forth beneath the skilful fingers of the fair musicians, awakening high and holy emotions in the hearts of the listeners. When it was ended there was an interval of deep silence more expressive than the wildest applause could have been, and then all fell to discussing the performance and the wondrous beauty of the performers. Very beautiful indeed were they, and the admirers of each grew enthusiastic in upholding the claims of their favorite as the most beautiful. Many were enraptured with "the charming little pupil—the bewitching fairy," as they not inaptly styled Jennie, with her lilly-like fairness of complexion, now deeply tinged with the rosy blush of modesty, soft rich tresses of spun gold, and "heaven-tinged orbs" whose prevailing expression was plainly one of mirthfulness and joy, though at this moment the elevating influence of the old master's sublime composition gave to them an expression of deep thoughtfulness. But the eyes of others rested more admiringly on the gifted teacher whose every movement was full of dignity and gracefulness, and whose lovely countenance, though it had not the bloom and joyousness of early youth, wore an air of peace, of calm serenity which had in it more of heaven than

earth; a look which seemed to tell that though the darkness of sorrow and trial had formerly overshadowed those perfect features, no gloom, no settled sadness rested on the meek spirit within.

And this pleasant evening was one of unalloyed happiness to Grace. Alfred's probation was ended. By unremitting application he had completed his legal studies, and was looked upon as a promising young lawyer, certain to win, if not high eminence, at least a respectable rank in his profession. And what was of most consequence to the fond sister, he adhered faithfully and earnestly to his religion, and shaping his life by its holy precepts and practices, found therein strength to resist the allurements and temptations to which his gay and pleasure-loving disposition rendered him liable. He had arrived in the village that afternoon, full of impatience first to go to Oakdale and refund the last portion of the money due to Mrs. Althorpe, and next to obtain from Grace the address of his "dear little nurse," that he might hasten to her and declare those feelings of which a strict sense of honor had hitherto forbade the avowal. To his joy he learned that she would be at the levee, upon which he gladly accepted an invitation to be present, and Grace had allowed but little time to elapse ere she had brought the two beings she most loved and valued together. She could see them now as she sat at the

piano playing lively tunes for those who wished to wind up the evening with a dance; could see her brother bending low over the graceful little figure at his side, and know by the conscious color that came and went so prettily on that fair, round cheek, that he was beguiling with "pleasant nonsense" the swift-winged hour.

After a time she saw Mrs. Althorpe approach the pair as they rested after a dance, and with a friendly greeting to Alfred, made some remark which caused her daughter to glance across the room to Grace. Then all three drew near to the piano, and Grace, at Mrs. Althorpe's suggestion resigned her place to Jennie, and accompanied her friend to the moon-lighted balcony to enjoy the quiet beauty of the hour. Mrs. Althorpe, however, did not remain long to enjoy it. Making some trifling remark, she glided back into the room, while a proud manly form took her place, and a voice to which Grace felt every nerve respond thrillingly, a voice which she had never thought to hear again, tenderly whispered her name. Let us not intrude on that hour of sweet and happy emotion. Sad and painful had been their parting: rapturous was the reunion upon which the guardian spirits, who so oft whispered sweet words of comfort to the gentle heart that had sacrificed its fondest hopes on the altar of duty, smiled approvingly.

The following morning, Alfred accompanied his sister to Oakdale, where a pleasurable surprise awaited him. He could scarcely believe that the kind friend for whom he had conceived an almost filial respect and affection, was the person against whom he formerly cherished the bitterest indignation for her fancied usurpation of his rights. Many were the favors he had received unsolicited from his *enemy*, and the cordial welcome she now gave him encouraged him to petition for a greater boon than all—the hand of her lovely and accomplished daughter. Mrs. Althorpe had no anxious misgivings now. He had proved himself every way worthy of the treasure he sought, and it was with a feeling of entire confidence that the fond mother gave the consent he craved, and bestowed her blessing on those who she trusted would be fellow-pilgrims through the varying scenes of life, mutually encouraging each other to walk in the straight and narrow way which alone leads to happiness here and hereafter.

And scarcely less joy did the amiable lady feel in the knowledge that her favorite Grace would be henceforth blessed with all the joys that earth can bestow. She had cordially welcomed the noble guest who had come to Oakdale all unconscious of the changes that had taken place since the evening of his angry departure from its hospitable halls; and upon learning

that the faith so precious to Grace was now his own, had gladly offered to conduct him to the academy, and procure him an immediate interview with her to whom he had found his heart turning instinctively as soon as the barrier which separated them was removed.

All was now joyous bustle and preparation at Oakdale. Powhattan pleaded as once before for an early day, and Grace had not the heart to deny his prayer. Alfred's lady-love was less compliant. With a pretty air of decision she vetoed his motion for a double wedding; declaring that she had always intended to be bridesmaid for dear Grace on the happy occasion. So it was decided that the second bridal should take place on the return of Powhattan and Grace from their wedding trip to the East, by which time also Willie Althorpe could be present. All were satisfied with the arrangement but our old friend the housekeeper, who most perversely refused to be satisfied with *anything*, or to show the least pleasure or interest in the momentous affairs on hand. The secret of her dissatisfaction came out at last. Her favorite Willie, whom she had always hoped to see master of Oakdale before her time came to die, was actually going to be a Priest,—more of the doings of that abominable religion which had first brought ill-luck and trouble to the house. She had put up with a good many things, but that beat her out. If anything

was wanting to fill up the measure of her indignation, it was the thought of Alfred Morton, whom she had never liked, becoming the husband of Jennie, and consequently master of the old place.

Bright and beautiful dawned the bridal morn of Grace Morton; all nature seemed to smile in approva of her choice, as she gave her hand to him who in all respects but one had long been her *beau ideal* of excellence, and from whom no duty longer separated her. No doubt clouded the sweet serenity of her brow or disturbed the sweet happiness of that hour as she knelt before the altar that had witnessed her admission into the bosom of the true church, and heard the Priest of God pronounce the words which united her to one who bent with equal reverence there. The great and gifted one who was to be her fellow traveller through the wilderness till they should reach the promised land, was animated by the same spirit. Like the hues of the rainbow, their tastes, and feelings, and sentiments blended harmoniously, and the star that had so long illumined her pathway now shed his holy radiance on his also. There was a union not only of hearts and hands, but of souls; they were not doomed to experience the agony of "those who love but may not blend in prayer." In the loftiest feelings, the highest aspirations of each heart, the other could share with ready sympathy.

“The happy pair” returned from their wedding tour in time to witness the sacred ceremony which united the destinies of Alfred and Jennie. Willie Althorpe was there also, happy in beholding the verification, in regard to those so dear, of the promise—
“Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.”
For him earth’s hopes and joys had no charm. All his aspirations had long been tending to that sublime vocation which the brightest spirits of heaven may regard with holy envy, and the pious youth was fitting himself by a life of study and prayer for the sacred office to which he aspired.

“Man proposes—God disposes.” And thus, after all “Uncle Althorpe’s” planning, was settled the vexed question of THE INHERITANCE.

THE END.