

DEDICATION.

TO MY WIFE,

WHO HAS BEEN ALWAYS

LOVING, TRUE, AND PATIENT WITH ME.

I DEDICATE

THIS LITTLE VOLUME.

DILLON O'BRIEN.

ST. PAUL, MINN., June 19th, 1873.

B
DEAD BROKE,

A WESTERN TALE.

By DILLON O'BRIEN.

FAITH IN GOD.

FAITH IN MAN.

FAITH IN FORTUNE.

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DEAD BROKE.

PART I.

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By DILLON O'BRIEN,

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Before Michigan was yet a State, Doctor Robert McGregor emigrated from Scotland and settled in the Territory. He was a widower, and brought with him his only child, a boy bearing his own name.

Whether or not the doctor bore any relationship to the famous Rob Roy McGregor, whom the genius of Scott has raised from a Highland cattle lifter into a hero of romance, he certainly in no way resembled him in character, for the doctor was a quiet, honest gentleman, somewhat reserved in manner, and withal a most excellent physician.

Doctor Robert McGregor's settling in this out of the way Western little village, was for some time quite a mystery to his pioneer neighbors, for he seemed a man amply provided with means, was past the period when men are often led by the love of adventure to seek frontier life, and neither in his actions or conversation was there evidence to

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denote that there was any portion of his past he wished to forget or conceal.

The greatest mystery Mrs. Grundy—and she lives in the wilderness as well as the city—can meet with, is, no mystery at all.

The doctor evidently should have had a mystery connected with him, a skeleton that Mrs. Grundy would unearth, and he had not one.

But when curiosity and conjecture died away, a better and more lasting feeling took their place, *i. e.*, respect.

In truth, his residence among them was a substantial benefit to the settlers scattered over a wide section of country. His practice soon became extensive in breadth of territory at least, if not very remunerative, for fully two-thirds of his patients were always on the free list.

Indeed, it was said that the doctor was frequently imposed upon; but I do not think so, for in his quiet way he was a keen observer, but not being a saint by any means himself, he did not look for perfection in others, and I am inclined to believe that he often lent himself and became, as it were, a party to what people, who had no earthly business to interfere, called imposition.

For instance, a poor settler in the neighborhood lost his cow, his only one; and his wife, heretofore as healthy a wench as one could find in a week's journey, was very suddenly taken ill, and sent for the doctor.

He went, listened to a recital of the symptoms,

during which the loss of the cow was more than once alluded to, and then spoke to her kindly and encouragingly.

He left without having ordered any medicine; "but sure," as the patient remarked afterward to a neighbor, "his kind voice was worth all the physic in a drug store," and the next morning a cow from his own yard stood at the poor settler's door, and the patient was so far recovered, that on the evening of the same day she milked the cow.

There was a little man named Solomon Weasel living in the village, who, during the week, sold small quantities of tea, sugar, soap, and candles to the villagers—and made the quantities still smaller by giving light weight—and on Sunday sang psalms through a long nose that started from its base toward the left, and then suddenly diverged and pointed to the right. I am thus minute in describing this nose, because I believe that its peculiar formation was a beautiful design of nature to assist holy shakes. Keeping also a stock of simple medicines, he regarded himself as by right, a kind of coadjutor of the doctor's—a claim not at all allowed by the latter, who always avoided any intimacy with him—and hearing of this case, and of the sudden recovery of the woman, he called on the doctor for the purpose of disclosing to him the "gross imposition" that had been practiced upon him, and giving him some friendly warnings for the future, deeming this an excellent opportunity to ingratiate himself into the doctor's favor. But the latter's

reception of him was too chilling to make him ever wish to repeat his visit.

"As a physician, sir," said the doctor, "I must be the best judge as to the reality of the poor woman's sickness, and as the owner of the cow, best judge as to how to dispose of my property. 'Cast your bread upon the waters,' sir; at all events you will allow me to cast my crumbs as I please."

There were three things Doctor McGregor was passionately fond of—his books, his garden, and hunting; the wild turkey and deer abounding at that time in Michigan, gave him plenty of opportunity to indulge in the latter amusement to his heart's content.

As soon as the winter snow fell, the doctor set off on a tour that was half professional and half hunting; so while one side of his ample saddle-bags contained—with a change of clothing—bullets and powder, the other side was well stocked with medicines and surgical instruments.

He used to say that all the old women of the country waited for this time to get sick, and the men to give themselves ugly cuts, bruises and broken bones, and as it was the chopping season in the woods, accidents no doubt were more likely to happen at this period than at any other.

Whether his medical skill was required or not, the doctor's visits to the settlements in the woods were always hailed with universal pleasure, indeed, not a little jealousy was evinced as to who should have the honor of entertaining him, and those most

favorable in this respect were objects of more or less envy.

Of course there were favored ones, mostly old hunters, that were in the habit of joining him in his hunting excursions, when he came into their neighborhoods.

Any one of these would be willing to swear that he could recognize the crack of the doctor's rifle, and indeed it frequently happened that, guided by the report and the knowledge of the locality, some one of the doctor's rough friends would hurry off into the woods to meet him, and assist to carry home the game; while the good woman would tidy up the log cabin for this honored guest.

Then, mayhap, when the shades of evening were closing around, the doctor would be seen emerging from the forest, his rifle slung on his shoulder, while a few paces behind came the settler leading the doctor's stout Canadian pony, across whose back would be flung the body of a deer, while perchance a turkey gobbler ornamented its wide antlers.

On an occasion of this kind, the doctor's arrival would be known in the settlement within a few hours, and during his stay in the neighborhood, all his time within doors was occupied in receiving visits from the well and sick, and prescribing for the latter.

Shortly after his arrival in Michigan, Doctor McGregor built—on the outskirts of the village—a substantial cottage, which he called Inverness Cottage, and to it attached an extensive garden.

This aristocratic weakness, most innocently committed, hurt the republican feelings of his neighbors very much, and militated against his popularity; but this feeling was only temporary, and in time the inhabitants of the village of P—— took quite a pride in showing to strangers visiting them, Inverness Cottage, and its well kept garden; for the owner was a well skilled botanist, and kept a hired man, whose principal business it was to attend to this garden, his only other domestic being a middle-aged, respectable woman, who acted as housekeeper, and took care of his child while the latter was of an age requiring such attention.

Besides the purchase of the ground on which the cottage was built, Doctor McGregor from time to time had bought several lots in the village, and a tract of wild government land in the immediate neighborhood, justly surmising that in time the property secured now at almost nominal prices, would become valuable, if not to himself at least to his child.

This boy, when he arrived with his father in the village of P——, was a warm hearted, imaginative little fellow, quick to make friends, and to believe in them implicitly, and this trust common to childhood he carried with him into maturer years.

There were many circumstances in his bringing up which tended to develop all that was romantic in his nature, and to let that shrewdness and common sense—for which the Scotch character is proverbial—lie dormant.

He attended the village school and learnt rapidly, and when of a proper age, his father instructed him at home.

Doctor McGregor had brought with him from Scotland a supply of books quite sufficient to fill one side of his study in the cottage; leaving room, however, between the top of the bookcase and the ceiling for the antlered heads of deer, trophies of the chase; while on the opposite side were ranged rifles and shot-guns; on this side, too, was a large bay window looking out upon the garden. This room was the favorite resort of father and son, both in winter and summer. Here the doctor, reclining in his large arm-chair—after a morning's work among his flowers in the garden—would read some favorite author, or in the evening hear his son recite his lessons; and here during the winter evenings, when his father was off on one of his hunting expeditions or attending a professional call, young Robert might be often seen sitting opposite the wide fireplace—whose huge back-log and crackling faggots gave out a cheerful warm blaze—quite absorbed in one of Sir Walter Scott's historical romances, Burns' ballads, or one of Cooper's bewitching stories of the sea or forest.

Such hours were perhaps the happiest in the boy's life, but the most dangerous for his future success in this matter-of-fact Yankee land; nor as he sat there was there an uninteresting picture to look in upon: the large fireplace, the ruddy blaze throwing out its flickering light and shadow, to dance in

grotesque forms along the walls and curtains—now glancing along the polished gun barrels, or lighting up with a mockery of life, the glass eyes of the stags' heads—and the slight form in the ample old-fashioned chair with intense interest resting on every feature of the young face.

Left a good deal to himself, and allowed to spend his hours of recreation as his fancy might dictate, with an imaginative mind and affectionate disposition, there was much in this boy's surroundings to develop a romantic nature, that loved to fashion out of the realities around an ideal world of its own.

For him the primeval forest surrounding his home was at his pleasure peopled with brave knights and fair "ladyes;" along the blazed path through the woods, he saw the tall form of "Le Longue Carabine" advancing, his unerring rifle slung over his shoulder; or watched "Le Gros Serpent" stretched beneath a giant tree, while "Uncas"—his dark, sad eyes looking into space—listened to his father's recital of the departed greatness of the Mohicans.

In truth, young Robert McGregor was in a fair way to become the veriest dreamer that ever was, but for one healthy influence, the friendship of a boy about his own age, and the very opposite to him in many traits of character.

If Robert McGregor gave promise of being one of life's dreamers, James Allen, or Jim, as he was known by his friends, was evidently cut out for one

of its workers; there was energy in every nerve of his little body, as he scampered home after school to do his chores.

His father, John Allen, was the village blacksmith, an honest son of Vulcan, liked by his neighbors, and earning at his trade a sufficiency to keep his family respectable and above want. He had lost several children, and when Doctor McGregor came to reside in the village, the blacksmith's home contained but himself, his wife, and this, his only child.

Allen had a great respect for the doctor, and their intercourse was always of the most friendly nature, a state of feeling which may have had its origin in the fact that the blacksmith was of Scotch descent, but which required no such auxiliary to make it lasting.

Frequently in the fall, returning from a day's partridge shooting in the woods, the doctor, late in the afternoon, would drop into the blacksmith's shop to have a friendly chat, and there remain sometimes until the shades of evening fell, carelessly leaning against the wall, his dog lying at his feet, and his hands resting on his gun, while the sturdy blacksmith drew the glowing bar of iron from the fire, and with lusty strokes sent the red sparks flying around the forge, the cheerful ring of the hammer making a fitting accompaniment to his loud voice and merry laugh.

On certain Scotch festivals, too, the doctor always gave him a formal invitation to take a glass of

Scotch toddy with him in his study, but notwithstanding the exhilarating influence which the toddy might be expected to exercise, the honest fellow's laugh was never half so hearty on these occasions as when the doctor visited him in his own smithy or his own house. Having a general and warm invitation to do so, Allen in the summer months—when the doctor's garden was clothed in all its glory—would bring his wife on Sunday afternoons to visit it, Jim in his best clothes walking with restrained steps by the side of his mother, while health and half an hour's application of a coarse towel made his father's face glow like one of his own heated irons. If the doctor was at home, he very likely joined them in the garden, when after a little Mrs. Allen would go into the house to pay a visit to the housekeeper, and the two men would continue their walk up and down the garden, discussing the news of the day, the growth of the village, and the prospect of the crops, now and then stopping to look at a shrub or flower, while the doctor imparted scraps of botanical knowledge to his friend, which was received by the latter with great respect, albeit the knowledge thus conveyed passed from his mind as quickly as water through a sieve.

But there was one who was always on the watch for such visits, doubtless having previous intimation of them.

No sooner had the blacksmith opened the side gate and entered the garden with his family, than Robert McGregor would issue from the house and

go bounding down the walk, when he would be met half way by Jim, in an equally impetuous manner, making a collision—sometimes resulting in the shortest possible sojourn in a prickly gooseberry bush—of frequent occurrence; then, when damages were repaired, both boys were off to the woods, the garden being altogether too small for a display of their youthful energies, and would not again make their appearance till hunger drove them home.

On occasions of this kind they were met sometimes on the outskirts of the forest by Solomon Weasel—who went there, as he said, “for sweet meditation,” never, however, venturing beyond the clearings, for he was a timid little creature, and though his faith was strong, his fear of bears and catamounts was stronger.

As the boys approached him, leaping over logs, beating the brush with branches, striking at a snake as he crossed their path, and then flinging his dead body far off into the brush, the little man's face would grow several shades more sour, and in a harsh, whining voice, he would reprove them for “their willful levity on the Lord's day”—as if he who makes the flowers to give forth their fragrance, and the birds their songs on the Sabbath, did not intend that on this day, above all others, man resting from his labors should rejoice amid the beauties of the earthly inheritance his Creator has given him. But Jim, with a hardened levity unpardonable in one so young, would in-

interrupt the pious reproof with a loud Indian war-whoop, and then in several somersaults and complicated evolutions, disappear from the good man's eyes, followed by Robert.

I have said that in many traits of character, these boys were essentially different; however, they had excellent points in common, which helped to cement their friendship—both were manly, truthful, and affectionate, but in appearance there was not the slightest resemblance. Robert McGregor was tall for his age, with a slight elastic figure. In fact, he bore a striking likeness to the portrait of his mother, which hung in his father's library, a calm face that might grow very sad—yet whose smooth surface denoted that care had not written on it roughly—with dark full eyes, an expressive mouth, and an exquisitely chiseled chin.

This was the portrait of a delicate, refined woman, and her son, grown up in the woods, habituated to the roughness of Western life, his face browned by the summer's sun, his features made coarse by continual and healthful exposure in the open air, bore still a striking resemblance to it.

James Allen, on the other hand, was short and thick, with the shoulders and arms of a young Hercules; his complexion was what is called red and white, and although the sun waged a successful war against his turned-up nose, peeling the skin off several times during the summer, it never succeeded in making his complexion one shade darker; his eyes were light grey, and he had the most obstinate,

perverse, unmanageable red hair that ever bristled on a boy's head! Like Banquo's ghost, "it would not down."

These two boys, so different in nature and appearance, were fast friends from the time they first met as children, and each exercised an improving influence upon the other. The practical energy and shrewd common sense of Jim—qualities which become so much earlier developed in the children of poor people than in those of the rich—had a salutary effect in checking his friend's excursions into dreamland, and dispelling his romantic visions, while the more refined organization of Robert McGregor, together with that ease of manner which he had acquired from close intercourse with his father, had a certain elevating effect on the mind of the blacksmith's son—a polishing of a rough diamond without injuring its value. At school they sat on the same bench, and fought side by side in the play ground. Robert would never strike his adversary while down, it was unknightly, but Jim had no such refined feelings, and pommeled away with his little sledge hammer fists, whether the enemy was on his feet or his back.

Even Cupid failed to divide these two friends.

Both were warm admirers of Lucie Evans, a little orphan maiden, who lived with her aunt, a poor woman who had a house full of younger children of her own to care for, but nevertheless contrived—her husband being a sober, hard working man—to keep Lucie neatly dressed; Lucie, indeed, was natu-

rally so tidy a little body, that any kind of dress would look well upon her.

Both boys were her champions at school—Robert assisted her with her lessons, lent her books to read; Jim carried off her sleigh to his father's shop, and with some assistance from the latter, shod it. But, alas! when did cold gratitude compete with warm fancy, without being obliged to succumb.

The very next day when Lucie appeared on the school house hill, with the newly shod sleigh, it was Robert she invited to accompany her, and guide the sleigh.

Down they went, swiftly coasting to the foot of the long, high hill, then slowly back, dragging the sleigh after them, slipping and laughing at every step, then down and up again, until the cheeks of the little maiden shamed the red lining of her hood, and her eyes sparkled brighter than the diamond hoar frost hanging from the boughs; so she appeared to Jim who stood watching them.

As they ascended the hill for the fourth or fifth time, Robert looking up, saw Jim standing all alone, and in a moment he remembered that it was Jim who had shod this very sleigh for Lucie, and that she had not yet asked him to take a ride on it, so he said, "Lucie, it is Jim's turn next, he has not got a ride yet;" she gave a half shrug to her pretty little shoulders, just as any other spoiled belle—much older—might have done, at which Robert looked cross, and said, "Why, you know, Lucie, the trouble he took to iron your sleigh."

"Oh, yes," said Lucie; "but I think you steer better."

"No I don't," said Robert; "halloo, Jim, come and steer Lucie," and away he went to join another party, and away went Jim and Lucie down the hill.

That same evening, as Jim was preparing for supper, and looking in a cracked glass, endeavored to get the unmanageable red hair to lie down, he said to himself: "She likes Robert twice as well, and she's right."

From this out it seemed tacitly admitted by the parties most interested, that Robert McGregor was the favored boy admirer of pretty little Lucie Evans.

When Robert was thirteen years of age, although he still continued to attend the public school, his father commenced to superintend his education at home. At the earnest request of his son, the doctor proposed to Allen that James should study with the former, but the blacksmith, resting his hands on his ponderous sledge, shook his head as he replied: "Thank you, doctor, but no Latin or Greek for Jim; what good would they do the boy? He must work at the anvil like his father and grandfather before him, and too much learning would make him uppish like. In two years or so, I will take him into the shop to help me; he is handy in it already."

"He is a very good, manly little fellow," said the doctor, "and I am very glad he and Robert are such good friends."

"Well, but arn't they, doctor," replied the blacksmith. "I never saw the beat of it. I wonder how it will be when Robert is a fine gentleman, and Jim hammering away at the anvil. What are you going to make of Robert, doctor?"

"I will allow him to make his own choice, but first I shall try to give him as good an education as I can. Perhaps you are right about the Latin and Greek, but I have a pretty good stock of books, histories and works on practical science, and Jim is as welcome to their use as my own son, so I advise you to give him as much time for reading with Robert as you can."

"Well, it wouldn't be very easy to keep them asunder," replied the blacksmith, with a jolly laugh. And so it turned out that, while Robert was engaged in study, according to the system his father had marked out for him, James was frequently reading some book selected by himself, generally a work treating on some branch of practical science. As for Robert's highly prized romances, he utterly ignored them, either from want of taste for such reading, or that Robert, by oral instruction, and continual spouting—as it is termed—passages from his favorite authors, during their rambles in the woods, had given him a surfeit of this kind of literature.

This reading in the cosy study on winter evenings was pleasant work. When the doctor was present, absorbed in his book, the boys would pass from reading to converse in low tones with one an-

other; sometimes plans for the future were discussed, without any very definite conclusions being arrived at, at least so far as Robert was concerned. One scrap of conversation will illustrate many similar ones.

"What will you be, Robert, when you are a man?" asked James one evening, while the doctor dozed in his chair, and the boys whispered in a corner in under tones, not to disturb him.

"I don't know. I tell you what, I would like to have been one of those splendid knights of old, with belted sword and lance, and pennon gaily flying, riding forth on my fiery steed. But those days are all past."

"Small loss," said Jim.

"What would you like to be, Jim?"

"A machinist, and I will be one. Father will soon take me into the shop, but I'm bound to know something more than blacksmith's work. Did you read about the 'fly wheel,' Robert?"

"No; what fly wheel?"

"What fly wheel?" repeated James, indignantly. "Why, the fly wheel which regulates all the machinery in one of those big factories down East. I was reading an account of it when you called me over. It's more useful in the world than your crack-brained knights ever were."

"But, Jim, if you are a machinist, your face will be always black."

"Soap is cheap," answered Jim, "and I can wash it. I'm not like you, Robert; my father is a

workman, and I'm going to be one. Your father is a big bug, and I suppose he can make one of you if he likes."

"I wish, Jim," said Robert, "that you would not call my father a 'big bug.'"

"Why not?"

"Because he is a gentleman."

"What is the difference?"

"Why, any fellow with money can be a 'big bug,' but it takes a gentleman to be a gentleman."

This very lucid explanation seemed to bother Jim for a moment, then he asked: "Can a machinist be a gentleman, Robert?"

"Yes, he can," said his friend.

"Then see, Mr. Robert, if I won't be a gentleman as well as the best of you."

The latter part of this conversation was held considerably above a whisper, and reached the doctor's ears. He called Jim over to him, and the boy, with a flushed face at being overheard by the doctor, stood before him and looked full into his eyes.

The old gentleman laid his hand kindly on the boy's shoulder.

"Be a true man in everything, James," he said, "and you will be a gentleman."

And in all his after life, amid rough companions and wild scenes, these words were never forgotten by him to whom they were addressed.

PART II.

Time sped on, making changes in the village of P—— as elsewhere. Indeed, change, growth and development is the normal state of the West. No settling down for any length of time out West in a quiet little village, and being on familiar terms with its one constable, whose public duties are so light as to allow him to unbend from the dignity of official position, and bring to you your weekly or tri-weekly mail on the arrival of the stage; a condescension which weakens the authority of this public functionary with the urchins who crowd around the stage on its arrival, deeming it to have come from some very distant country, and looking upon its driver as a very wonderful traveler, indeed, whose unbroken vocabulary of oaths excites their admiration and emulation. No sooner do you settle in your out-of-the-way Western little village, escaped, as you foolishly imagine, from politicians, lawyers, editors, and all the other ills of civilization, and hug yourself with the idea that the world may wag on without you, than it comes wagging right into your retreat. Engineers, without as much as, by your leave, plant their instruments in your flower beds, and an unsightly brown three-story elevator goes up in front of your cottage, shutting out all view.

A railway director, in your very presence, pointing his finger toward your house, says quite coolly

to an engineer, "We must get that out of the way, Thompson." The swift-flowing, pure river, that you called, after Bryant's beautiful poem, "The River of Green," becomes the dirtiest, noisiest place in the whole neighborhood, from the mills built along its banks. Lawyers and insurance agents flock in, lawsuits and fires prevail. Two newspapers continually proclaim to the world that the human intellect is altogether too limited to comprehend, in the remotest degree, the future greatness of Frogtown. And where you fished for trout, speculators fish for gudgeons.

A few years after Doctor McGregor had settled in Michigan, it became a State, and the village of P—— began to grow into the proportions of quite a respectable sized town. So that after a while his cottage was no longer in the suburbs, but surrounded with brick houses of far greater pretensions. However, it still had its beautiful garden, which despite its red brick neighbors, retained for it its rural appearance.

By the time that P—— had fifteen hundred inhabitants—and claimed three thousand—it had a fire brigade, a bank, several societies—the latter of great benefit to numerous saloons, and of great detriment to domestic happiness—and two newspapers, "The Banner of Freedom," and "The Trumpet of Liberty."

Then the ambition of P—— rose in its majesty, and through its member it applied to the Legislature for a city charter.

It was a mere matter of form to obtain such—for I have known a Western city with but one tumble-down shanty in it—nevertheless, on this occasion, the honorable member representing the district in which P—— was, deemed it due "to the glorious State, whose citizen he was, to the republic—the home of freedom, the dread of tyrants—which has lately added this beauteous gem to its diadem, to the influential and intelligent constituents who had so honored him as to elect him as their representative, an honor altogether unsought by him," (he had spent a considerable sum in forty-rod whiskey, and six months in electioneering for the nomination,) to depict in a speech of an hour and a half, and replete with bombast, slang and bad grammar, the future greatness of P——, as the "emporium of commerce, the seat of learning, and the stronghold of republican liberty," and concluded with a glowing panegyric on the "American Eagle," as the noble bird disappeared in the lofty clouds of the honorable gentleman's eloquence.

This speech was received in P—— with conflicting opinions, according to the political feelings of its critics.

The editor of the "Banner of Freedom" (Whig) pronounced it, "the best effort of our gifted member, the Hon. Columbus Stubbles, and deemed that without doubt the occasion did much to inspire his eloquent tongue;" while the editor of "The Trumpet of Liberty" (Democrat) "thought that old Stubbles

must have been drunk when he talked such downright balderdash."

"As an orator and debater, the Hon. Columbus Stubbles has by this speech made his mark," said the "Banner of Freedom."

"He has made a downright ass of himself," said the "Trumpet of Liberty."

However, P—— got its charter, and set about electing its mayor and city council.

The names of the two editors in P—— were whimsically appropriate. Dumpling, the editor of the "Banner," was exceedingly short and fat, while Crane, the editor of the "Trumpet," was in an equal degree tall and thin. These personal characteristics were the objective points that they generally selected in their perpetual wordy war with each other; sometimes one or other of them would be able to make an accusation against his brother editor, more damaging than anything connected with personal appearance, and such opportunities were eagerly sought for, but the leanness or fatness of the party attacked generally supplied the adjectives of the damaging articles. Crane did not believe that he would be performing his duty to society by simply proving to the world that Dumpling was a ruffian, he must prove him to be a "fat ruffian;" while in an article of two columns length in the "Banner," in which Dumpling conclusively convicted Crane of arson, murder, bigamy and petty larceny, he closed by saying: "We don't believe that we have left the lean rascal a hole small

enough for him to crawl through." In their more playful sallies, Crane feared that if Dumpling put so much of his nature (lard) into his articles, they would disagree with his few readers, and Dumpling announced in the "Banner," under the head of "singular accident," that the editor of the "Trumpet," in rushing down stairs to meet his only cash subscriber, came in contact with the latter, and nearly cut him in two.

At this time, in the West, country editors were mostly paid by their subscribers in produce, a cord of wood being deemed an equivalent for a year's subscription, butter and vegetables rating according to the market; subscribers were artfully enticed into adding to the regular tariff by presents, which were duly acknowledged by the editor, the value of the present regulating the length of the notice, and the praise bestowed on the donor. A good sized crock of butter was deemed worthy of a leader containing a short biography of "the upright citizen and valued friend" who presented it, while a dozen or two of eggs would elicit something like the following: "Our jolly friend, farmer Grubs, *laid* on our table last week a dozen of beautiful turkey eggs; thanks, friend Grubs, call again." Of course, the wonderful Grubs, quite proud at seeing his name in print, called and *laid* again.

Dumpling, being of a more genial humor than his rival editor, presents came into the sanctum of the "Banner" far oftener than into that of the "Trumpet." What a pleasant way Dumpling had,

to be sure, of receiving such presents; anything eatable he would smack his lips over, rub his stomach, smile all over, and punch his patron softly in the ribs. Then, when the latter had withdrawn, Dumpling would wink, with one of his fat eyes, over at his solitary compositor, and say: "I'm the fellow that can tickle them." But such undignified conduct was altogether beneath the editor of the "Trumpet of Liberty." "I advocate principles, sir," he would say. "The Trumpet is the organ of great principles; principles, sir, which you cannot eradicate from the Trumpet, without tearing down the pillars of the Republic; principles which the Trumpet cannot abandon for a cord of wood or a fat turkey," and he laughed bitterly, thinking of the plump bird he saw carried into the office of the "Banner" the day before.

The first election for city officers was a great event in P——, and during the local canvass that preceded it, Crane and all the young Cranes literally fed on the fat of the land; for the Democratic candidate for mayor, was a butcher of the name of Thompson, and the editor of "The Trumpet of Liberty" had for the time being unlimited credit at his shop.

Solomon Weasel had secured the Whig nomination, and in the words of Dumpling, "The country, with bated breath, awaited the issue."

Had the management of the contest been left between the two candidates, Thompson would undoubtedly have beaten Solomon Weasel out of sight,

for the former was a free-hearted fellow, and treated liberally; but the politicians of P—— sided with the latter, and having denounced Thompson for attempting to corrupt the people with drink, they went to work and saved a good many of the voters from such degradation, by buying them over to vote for their candidate. Solomon Weasel was elected mayor of the city of P——, and three others—among whom was John Allen, the blacksmith—aldermen.

The great contest was over, the world moved on, the country again drew its breath in a natural way, the editor of the "Banner" was jubilant, and the editor of the "Trumpet" returned to vegetable diet.

Mean little souls never forget a supposed insult or slight, and his honor, the Mayor of P——, was no exception to this. He had never forgotten the cold reception he met with when he called upon Doctor McGregor, or how the latter always avoided any familiarity with him, and he had scarcely been installed in office when he began debating in his own mind if it was not possible, in his official capacity, to "get even" with the man he so thoroughly hated. It was not long until a plan occurred to him, one which he firmly believed would annoy the doctor so much, that the very contemplation of it brought a warm glow to his pinched face. It was nothing more or less than getting the council to pass an ordinance for the opening of a new street, which would run through the doctor's garden, cutting it right in two.

"Inverness cottage, to be sure," he said, "see if I don't come even with you, you old Scotch aristocrat." He waited for about a month to mature his plan, in the meantime discussing with the citizens the necessity of opening new streets; and then, not without some wholesome dread of John Allen, submitted it to the three aldermen in council, having previously secured the support of the other two.

The mayor was right in fearing John Allen's opposition. When the honest blacksmith had studied the diagram prepared by Solomon, he exclaimed in tones of surprise and indignation, "Why, Mr. Mayor, this new street would go right through Dr. McGregor's garden." "Well, what of that," replied one of the aldermen; "I guess public improvements can't be stopped by any man's garden."

"That's what I say," said Sims, the other alderman.

"That's the very view to take, gentlemen," said the mayor, moving away until he had placed one of the aldermen between himself and Allen, for the latter, as he perceived how matters stood, was beginning to look dangerous; "I shall leave the whole matter in your hands; public duty, and the interests of our growing city, were my only motives for bringing it before you."

"You lie, Solomon Weasel," said the blacksmith, jumping up, and totally forgetful, in his rage, of the respect due to the august body of which he was a member, and to the mayor. "You lie; you are

doing this through spite, because Doctor McGregor always knew you to be a sneaking hypocrite and thief, and treated you as you deserved."

"Order, order," said one of the aldermen, vainly looking around to see if assistance was at hand.

"Oh, Mr. Allen, Mr. Allen," exclaimed Sims, pale with fright.

Weak as his honor, the mayor's, limbs were with fear, he would have made for the door, but that the burly form of the smith was between him and it, and the windows were too high to leap from.

"Order be ——," continued the smith. "Why, this garden is the pride of P——, and the old man loves it; have you spoken to him about this new street?"

"No," replied the mayor.

"Ah, that's like you, and shows your motive," said Allen.

"I think we had better adjourn," said Sims. "I will call on Doctor McGregor myself about the matter, before we take any further steps."

While the motion to adjourn was put and carried, Solomon Weasel effected his escape from the council room.

"I'll be even with him yet," said he, as he hastened home; then, when he was under the protection of his own roof, his courage returned, and he fairly swelled with rage as he thought of the indignity with which the blacksmith had treated the Mayor of P——.

"I will have the rascal arrested," he said. "I

will take an action against him for libel; I will have him prosecuted for assault and battery; I will have him expelled the council; I will have him bound over to keep the peace; I will be even with him and that old stuck-up doctor yet; I'll have two constables in the room the next time the question of opening the new street comes up; see if I don't get even with them all yet." But,

"The best laid schemes
Of mice and men,
Gang aft alee."

Doctor McGregor attended the next meeting of the council, and not alone consented to the opening of the street, but actually advocated it as a necessary improvement. "I have perceived for some time back," he said, "as our town grew, that my cottage was no longer in the suburbs, and that it would be necessary to curtail the size of my garden. That portion of it which will be taken for the new street, I cheerfully donate to the city, and," (taking up his hat and bowing politely to the aldermen) "you shall have a deed of it, gentlemen, any time you please."

"Well," said Alderman Sims, when the doctor had withdrawn, "the doctor is a gentleman, and a good citizen, every inch of him."

"Yes," replied John Allen, looking over to where Weasel sat, flanked by two constables, and looking quite dumbfounded at the turn events had taken. "Yes, you won't find many like him; but it's a thousand pities to cut up that beautiful garden.

Many a pleasant hour I spent in it with the doctor;" and the scowl with which he had regarded the mayor a moment before, passed away from his face, and gave place to a soft, thoughtful look.

The new street was opened, and the lower portion of Doctor McGregor's garden which it cut off from his cottage, he had divided into building lots; these were quickly disposed of, and the doctor realized a considerable sum out of the sales, while the shrunk garden looked, if possible, tidier and more blooming than ever, and certainly more in conformity with the size of the cottage.

Thus Solomon Weasel, his honor! the mayor of P——, got even with the doctor; and it would be well if every malicious rascal could get even with others the same way.

Somehow the whole story got abroad, with many additions. Solomon Weasel's threats to get even with the doctor had been frequently heard by his cronies, who, of course, retailed them, and as American boys neither fear God or the d—l, much less a mayor, Solomon's dignity was often sorely hurt by urchins bawling from the corners of streets: "Say, Weasel, how did you get even with Doctor McGregor?"

Indeed, after a few years, it became the popular belief of P——, that Weasel had made Doctor McGregor's fortune; until hearing it said so often, the ex-mayor came to believe it himself, which so worried him, that he took to drink, and died not in the odor of sanctity, but of bad whiskey.

PART III.

While these changes were taking place in P——, some of the characters in this sketch were becoming old, while others of them were advancing to that glorious period of life, when, with hearts and limbs fresh and strong, we long to enter life's battle, and never dream of defeat.

The sturdy blacksmith's step had become somewhat slow, although his lusty blows on the anvil still rang out as cheerfully as ever; and the doctor's hunting excursions were now less frequent, and generally confined to the near neighborhood.

The two boys had left school—James Allen, to work in his father's shop—while month after month Dr. McGregor put off sending Robert to college, and the longer he deferred it, the more difficult he found it to make up his mind to part with him.

Robert perceived the struggle in his father's mind, and said to him one day: "Why should it be necessary, father, for me to leave you? I am sure I can learn just as much here with you, as in college."

"Very well, my boy," said his father, brightening up, "we will commence a regular course of reading to-morrow, and in a year or two hence you can choose some profession or business. I am not very uneasy about you, Robert, for we have a suffi-

ciency to last both our lives, and more than this is a burden and a curse."

Lucie Evans, too, was now a beautiful, bewitching little fairy—entering her sixteenth year—who had already driven half a dozen dry goods clerks to the verge of distraction, only preserving their reason by copious discharges of doggerel verses, which would have the very opposite effect on any unfortunate person compelled to read them.

In this country we are apt to think that interest, regardless of personal merit, can secure any appointment, from the lowest to the highest, and doubtless, in the main, this is true; but there is in the American character a generous sympathy, a manly wish to help the weak, not found, to the same extent, in any other nationality. A deserving young person is never without friends in America; a whole community will acknowledge the claims of such, cheerfully give a helping hand, and rejoice in his or her after success. There are many causes for the development of this disinterested sympathy. In this country, to which hundreds of thousands of poor strangers come every year, seeking homes, to give a helping hand has become habitual, and there is great satisfaction in giving a fellow a push ahead, when you know that he is likely to keep going on. In Europe, where the crowds are so great, and the passages to success so narrow, people undertake the work more reluctantly, from a conviction that they may have to keep pushing all the time.

When a vacancy for a teacher occurred in the

primary department of the public school of P——, Lucie Evans—at the suggestion of the principal teacher, of whom she was a great pet—applied for the place, and notwithstanding that there were many other applicants, some of whose parents were persons of influence, Lucie was unanimously appointed by the school board.

“She is an orphan, a good little girl, and a great help to her poor aunt, I am told,” said a good-natured member of the board, “we must give her a chance.”

“Of course, of course,” said the others. So the matter was settled, and Lucie duly installed in office.

It was a pleasant thing to drop into the school-room, and look at little madam sitting at her raised desk and keeping order among her youthful subjects—the child-face calm and grave from the responsibility of authority; and then when some hardened reprobate of six years old willfully broke the rules, to mark the contrast between the natural mirth of the young eyes and the attempted stern look of the other features. At first she found it somewhat difficult to walk home demurely when school was out, instead of racing away with the other girls, and swinging her bonnet by its long strings, but on the whole she adapted herself to her new position admirably. To the two boys—whose favorite she was at school—she appeared to have grown about five years older than either of them; she told Robert that she expected soon to hear

of his going to college, and “knocked James all of a heap,” by the matronly manner in which she expressed her pleasure at his commencing to assist his father in the shop, and “hoped to hear of his being a good boy.”

When James Allen began to work in his father's smithy, he had some misgivings as to his friend Robert McGregor; how would Robert, he thought, who was always well dressed, take to the leather apron and black face? There were plenty of well dressed young fellows anxious enough to be on friendly terms with the Doctor's son, and James clearly saw that from henceforth the difference in their positions might make the future relations of himself and Robert very different from what they had been when both were children.

In debating questions of this kind, we are very apt to be unjust, and to take a gloomy satisfaction in fully anticipating the supposed slight or injury, and being prepared to resent it. James had wrought himself into this gloomy state of mind, as on the second day after he had commenced regular work, he stood at the door of the smithy and saw his friend coming down the opposite side of the street, with two young gentlemen who had been staying for some time at the hotel in P——, and were just come back with Robert from a fishing excursion.

“No, I'll not stir from the door,” said James to himself, “if he wishes to pass with his fine friends, let him, the street is wide enough,” and he stuck his hands in his pants pockets, under his leather

apron, widened out his legs, and squared his shoulders, to meet with becoming independence the supposed coldness, that for a moment his morbid fancy led him to expect from his friend. But how thoroughly ashamed did the result make him feel. The moment Robert caught sight of James, standing at the door, his whole face lighted up with pleasure, and leaving his friends to follow more slowly after, he rushed across the street, and taking the young smith's hands in his, shook them warmly, then turning him round about, surveying him from head to foot, and laughing all the time, told him he never was so proud of him before, he looked so manly in his smith's dress.

By this time the two young fishermen had crossed over the street and joined them, whereupon Robert introduced them to his friend, "Mr. James Allen."

"Where is your father, James," he continued; "these gentlemen are going to spend the rest of the day with me at the cottage, and I cannot do without you; ah! here comes Mr. Allen, and I will ask him for the loan of his apprentice."

"Not to-day, Robert," said Jim, hurriedly.

"Why, what's the matter with the fellow?" queried Robert. "Perhaps, sir, you've grown too proud to know a 'ne'er-do-weal' idler like me."

"Well, Robert, I will follow you up after a little; go now, and don't keep your friends waiting."

"All right," said the other, passing on, then turn-

ing round he called out, "mind, old boy, if you are not up soon, I will come for you."

James turned into the shop thoroughly ashamed of the wrong he had done his friend, in thought. "What a nice fellow I was, to be sure," he said to himself, "to doubt Robert."

Doctor McGregor was a philosopher in his way; he believed in the sentiment which the poet who wrote it, did not:

"Man wants but little here below,
Nor wants that little long."

He was not soured against the world, nor weary of it, but weary of its petty ambitions and ceaseless struggles for the beyond, which, when reached, lost all the charm that distance lent to it.

In his youth he had fought life's battle and won, and then, without regret, retired from the field—without caring to gather the spoils—to spend the remainder of his life in comparative solitude, happy in his daily communings with nature, and in doing good to those amongst whom he had cast his lot. As his voluntary retirement from the busy world—before its toil had worn him out, and left him unfitted for tranquil enjoyment—had brought him happiness, it would not be easy to prove a want of wisdom on his part, in the step he had taken. But in imparting his peculiar views of life to his son, he forgot that he was influencing the latter to begin where he himself had left off, and that the philosophy which taught him to lay aside his armor

and retire from the fight, might work very disastrously in the case of Robert, if it induced him to neglect proper preparation for the strife, that, though unbidden, or unsought, might come to him. Yet, such was the tendency of Dr. McGregor's influence and teaching on the mind of his son.

If his lot was cast in smooth waters, Robert thought, why should he seek the stormy sea beyond. Sometimes, indeed, he felt ashamed of this aimlessness when he conversed with his friend Jim, and listened to the busy plans of the latter—how “he was to become a master mechanic, make inventions, take out patents, be presented to the President, receive the thanks of Congress,” and then Jim would laugh his boisterous laugh, making Robert feel that work had its bright side too, and for the time he would resolve to be a worker among men.

A happier home than Dr. McGregor's could not be found in all this broad land. Peace, content, and love dwelt in it all the year round, with the exception of one short period during the summer, when a brother of the doctor's paid him an annual visit. Those visits became wholly discontinued from a cause to be hereafter stated.

Two beings could not be more dissimilar in disposition than Doctor McGregor and his brother William. The latter, who was some years the elder, resided in New York, where he amassed a large fortune by speculations, principally in real estate. By nature a miser, years and the acquisi-

tion of wealth had increased his ruling passion to a mania; how to make money, and how to save it, were his two absorbing ideas, and his annual visits to Michigan were not caused by any fraternal feeling, but for the sole reason that he would be at no expense while taking the one month's rest, out of twelve, which his doctor told him was necessary for him.

To be a whole month away from business had a very damaging effect on his crabbed temper, and from his arrival to his departure, he visited his ill humor on the head of his unoffending brother, and tried the latter's patience sorely. The good doctor had to be continually saying to himself, “Well, he is my brother, a guest in my house, and he will soon be leaving.” This last thought always brought with it a sigh of relief. “You were always a fool, Robert,” he would remark. “Here you've buried yourself in this out-of-the-way place, when, if you had set up in New York, you could have made a fortune.”

“What good would that do me?” asked the doctor, one day, after listening to this indictment for at least the hundredth time.

“What good would it do him? the fool asks; what good does it do anyone?”

“Not as much as people suppose; I think, William, you have been racing after money all your life, and caught it, too, yet you do not seem particularly happy.” This was a home thrust, and the miser writhed under it. His beloved money was assailed,

and his barren, withered life did not afford one argument in its defence! He lost all self-control.

"What are you going to make of that cub of yours?" he savagely asked.

The doctor's face flushed. "This is a little too much, William," he said; "do you speak of my son Robert?"

"Yes, of that young gentleman, if you like the term better."

"Well, then, I intend that he shall be a gentleman."

"A nice way you are setting about it, allowing him to have for a companion an ignorant blacksmith's son."

"Perhaps, William, your reading of the term gentleman and mine do not agree; I mean by it, an honest, truthful, generous hearted man; you would search for a long time among your dandified young gentlemen in New York, before you would find one among them possessing in a greater degree those qualities than this blacksmith's son. James is a fine little fellow; I am glad he and Robert are such fast friends."

"So it would seem; he makes as free in this house as if it was his own; but I am mistaken if this young gentleman don't turn up some day in the penitentiary; he has the regular gallows look."

This prophecy struck the doctor as being so ridiculous, that he took a hearty fit of laughter, which restored him quite to good humor, and taking up a book, he strolled out to the garden.

As the above conversation was carried on in rather high tones, the two boys, who were in an adjoining room, unintentionally overheard the most part of it.

"You must not mind what that old crabbed uncle of mine says," said Robert; Jim's face was flushed, Robert thought with anger.

"Mind him," said Jim, "not I, but Robert, did you hear what your father said? Oh, Robert, he is like one of those old knights you read about, only ever so much better."

"It is too bad, that this old miser from New York, should come here to torment him," said Robert.

"So it is," replied Jim. "Let's try and get even with the old fellow, Robert."

"How?"

"I don't know, but if I hit on a way, will you back me up?"

"You may bet I will," replied Robert.

By the next day Jim had a plan devised to get even with the old miser, for his favorable opinion of him, and imparted it to Robert at school, who entered into it with the greatest glee.

"He spent all last evening trying to make my father miserable," said Robert, "and I won't stand it. If we succeed, Jim, in fooling him, he will pack off to New York, and never return, I hope."

The plan was a very simple one, yet it had features which Jim shrewdly surmised would be attractive for Mr. William McGregor; the latter had

frequently regretted that he had no opportunity during his visits west, to buy any furs from Indians or trappers, all such sales taking place in the spring, before his arrival. "It would be so pleasant," he said, "to make a little money, and not be idle during a whole month."

Jim generously proposed to befriend him. He should have an opportunity to buy furs.

There was at this time, in the neighborhood of P——, a vagrant Indian, who might be seen almost any day, lounging around the streets, who, retaining all the instincts of the savage, had engrafted on the original stock the civilized habits of drinking and swearing.

The boys of P—— had abbreviated his long Indian name into Indian Dick.

Jim and Robert knew, that for a few plugs of tobacco, Indian Dick could be got to do anything except honest labor, so they informed Robert's uncle that they knew of an Indian from whom he could purchase a stock of furs.

The miser caught at the bait, almost smiled at the boys, and told them that if he made a good purchase he might give them a York shilling.

The next move was to find Indian Dick, which they had no difficulty in doing; and on the presentation of some tobacco, and a promise of more, together with a silver dollar, the Indian agreed to play "Big Hunter."

Accordingly, bright and early next morning the two boys had him in the woods outside the town;

Jim, with exquisite relish and taste, painted his dirty face, and stuck goose feathers all over his head, while Robert rolled up in innumerable thick wrappers, half a dozen rabbit skins, until quite a large sized pack was made, which Indian Dick, with artistic taste, tied with deer sinews. Telling him to remain where he was until their return, and that all he should have to do would be to grunt and unfold the pack when told to do so, the boys, almost weak from excessive laughter, set off for the house.

Had Doctor McGregor been at home, perhaps his very presence would have warned them to give up their wild prank; but he had left in the morning, and was not to return till the following day.

Within an hour and a half after they reached the house, Mr. William McGregor was anxiously watching Indian Dick as he leisurely opened the big pack containing the valuable furs, and grunted, in answer to the numerous questions the former put to him; at length the furs were reached, the boys moved to a little distance as Indian Dick, with a stolid face and satisfied grunt, spread out the six rabbit skins before the eyes of the intending purchaser. A fearful change came to the face of the latter. A silent agony of rage, before which the boys quailed—making them wish undone that which they had done—transfixed him, and left him for a few moments powerless to move or withdraw his gaze from the pack; then he raised his eyes, and without regarding Jim or the Indian in the least, he gave Robert one long,

concentrated, diabolical look of hatred, and walked silently away.

"Ugh," said Indian Dick, "him damn mad."

I regret that truth compels me to state the exact words of Indian Dick on this occasion; I know that there are a great many people who would expect this noble red man to say, "He is as fierce as the north wind rushing through the leafless forest," or something similar; but Dick was a civilized Indian. Many good people had taken great pains to civilize him, and this was the depressing result. He said: "Him damn mad."

The two boys looked blankly at each other; Jim was the first to partially recover from the actual terror which this exhibition of downright terrible anger—witnessed for the first time—had inspired him with.

"What will we do, Robert," he asked.

"I don't know," replied Robert; "I suppose there is nothing to be done now; we have done too much already; my father is not at home, either, and I am afraid to meet that man alone. Did you see how he looked at me?"

"Did I? I thought his eyes would burn through you."

"Ugh! Him damn mad," repeated Indian Dick; "give Indian the dollar."

Robert handed him a dollar, glad to get rid of him, and Dick hurried off to get satisfactorily drunk.

"My father will be terribly annoyed with us, Jim," said Robert.

"I'm afraid so," replied the other; "and that frets me more than anything else; who would have thought that the old fellow would get so mad at a joke. Well, he deserved what he got for the way he has been speaking of us, and tormenting your father all the time. If I was the doctor, I would have turned him out of the house long ago."

When the boys reached the cottage, which they did not do for several hours, they skirmished around it for a long time, and then cautiously entered at the rear. But William McGregor was not there; from the woods he had gone direct to the hotel, and sent a man for his baggage, giving him a letter for Doctor McGregor, to be handed to the latter on his arrival home. Early the next morning the outwitted miser was on his way to New York.

It would have been an easy matter for Robert to have thrown this letter into the fire, and given his own version of the affair; but so mean a thought never entered his mind; on the contrary, he determined to hand it himself to his father, Jim insisting on being present, to bear his part of the blame.

Doctor McGregor was greatly agitated when he read this letter; it was couched in such bitter, cutting, insulting language, that it lessened in a degree the fault of the boys in his eyes. After all, what was it but a foolish boy's trick, for at the time neither Robert or Jim was much more than thirteen years of age. Nevertheless, he was seriously angry with them, and reproved them severely, while he

could not but admire the way each strove to take the greater portion of the blame on himself.

"It was all my fault," said Jim, "I proposed it to Robert."

"Jim never would have gone on with it, only for me," said Robert; "and, father, neither of us saw the harm of it until it was done."

"I believe you, Robert;" replied the doctor, "but my son, yours has been by far the greater fault, for you committed a breach of hospitality, and insulted a near relative. Now go away, and let me consider this matter over."

The next day he called Robert into his study, and dictated an apology, which he enclosed to his brother in a letter of his own, but the latter was returned unopened, and from that time all intercourse between those ill-matched brothers ceased, a fact which could not have fretted Doctor McGregor much, although he doubtless wished that the estrangement had taken place in some less objectionable way.

To Jim's great delight, he found himself as welcome a visitor at the cottage, and as great a favorite with its owner as ever; but he never met Indian Dick without calling up to mind the look which Robert's uncle had given his nephew in the woods, and the recollection of the incidents of that day—so funny in anticipation—never brought a smile to the faces of the principal actors, and all reference to the subject was studiously avoided.

In long years afterward, when least expected,

it was brought to Robert's mind with painful and vivid distinctness.

PART IV.

It was one of those delicious days in the American autumn, so bright and exhilarating, so fragrant with balmy air, so beautiful in the clear heavens above, and in the variegated foliage beneath, that the mere consciousness of life seems happiness enough. It was the morning of such a day when James Allen entered the room where Dr. McGregor and his son were at breakfast. James was dressed in his holiday clothes, his face was all aglow with excitement, and the unmanageable hair showed that all that could be done to subdue it had been done.

"What's up, James?" said the doctor; "going to be married?"

"No, sir; but my father is going to send me to New York, to learn the trade of a machinist."

"I'm very glad to hear it," said the doctor; "sit down, James, and tell us all about it, while you take a cup of tea."

But Jim was too excited to eat or drink anything; however, he sat down and entered into the explanation the doctor asked for, while Robert listened, as the saying is, "with both eyes and ears."

"I never spoke of it to father, though I often told you, Robert, I would be a machinist one of these days," said James, laughing. "I had just completed a nice piece of work, and father said to me: 'Jim, I can't teach you any more; you must go where you can learn to be a better tradesman than your father;' so at home, last night, mother and he settled that I should go to New York; I'm so glad that I never teased father about going, though I longed to do so, so much; and now it has all come from himself."

"You seem pretty glad to be leaving us, Jim," said Robert, in somewhat a reproachful tone.

"No," replied the other, in a cheerful voice. "Sorry enough for home, but it is about coming back a good tradesman, that I am thinking. You see, sir," he continued, turning to the doctor, "there are so many improvements going on in machinery, that there are branches now in the blacksmith's trade that were not known when my father learned it, and there would be no sense in remaining a common blacksmith, when one can be something much better."

"Just so," said the doctor.

"When do you go, Jim?" asked Robert; "in a month?"

"In a month!" exclaimed James. "No, in three days; and now finish your breakfast, Robert, and come out, we must spend the day together in rambling over our old haunts."

"If you do not intend to return before evening,

bring a lunch with you," said the doctor; "and mind, James, you will take supper with us."

In a short time both the young friends were out of the house. They were at that happy period of life when the dreams of boyhood still mingle with the hopes, ambitions, and desires of young manhood, and their near parting made them more fully conscious of the change that had taken place in themselves—that they were no longer boys. The sorrow, too, at parting with his friend, which quickly succeeded James' first burst of joyous excitement, made him more capable of sympathizing with the more romantic nature of the former. And in this mood, the familiar scenes around him, seemed to wear a new beauty in his eyes.

Leaving the town behind them, they entered the woods by the well beaten path. The fall frost had changed the uniform green of the summer foliage into an endless variety of hues—here was the gorgeous sumach with its blood-colored leaves, the delicate pink and pale gold of the young maple, the quivering, yellow leaf of the poplar; nay, a thousand varieties of autumn shades, contrasting with the green foliage of tree and shrub that still retained their summer dress, while the leaves already fallen and browned rustled along the path, telling that all this beauty was but the premonition of decay.

"We will keep on to Prince Charles' tree, Robert," said James.

This was a magnificent elm tree which Robert

had named after the celebrated oak in England, within whose branches, tradition says, that Charles the Second once found refuge.

Years before, when quite little fellows, Robert and James had grubbed and cleared the ground, sowing grass seed, so that there was now a nice greensward of tame grass beneath.

Beneath this tree—in whose bark the irrepressible American jack-knife had cut in several places the names of "Robert McGregor," "James Allen," and "Lucie Evans"—the young men sat down to talk over the intended departure of James. They scarcely had done so, when several squirrels came running down the tree, and coming quite close, raised themselves on their hind legs, their bushy tails resting on their backs, while their brown eyes watched eagerly for recognition. This was a chosen spot for lunching in the woods, and the habit made the squirrels quite tame, so that they had come to look upon the fragments as their just perquisites.

"Here are our little friends, Jim," said Robert, "come to say to you, good-by." Then the two friends talked long and earnestly of the future.

"You are making the first break, Jim," said Robert; "and who knows where or to what it may lead; at all events, I feel that the old days are over."

"But not the old friendship, Robert," replied Jim. "As you say, old days or young days—whichever you may wish to call them—are gone by; we are no longer boys. But give me your hand, old fellow; and now, Robert, let us pledge each other

that through life we will always remain the same warm, true, loving friends that we have been."

"To the death," replied Robert, as his eyes filled with tears. "And here is the seal to the contract," he continued, as he kissed James' check.

"And mine," said James, performing the same ceremony.

How well this pledge was kept will be seen hereafter.

The evening was closing in when the friends returned to the house; and three days afterwards, James Allen was on his way to New York.

Soon a letter came, announcing his safe arrival, and then Robert and he became regular correspondents; he also wrote frequently to his father, who always showed (with great pride) his son's letters to Doctor McGregor.

It had been settled before he left, that he was to remain away for two years, and when six months of the time had expired, a letter to his father came from James' boss, speaking in the highest terms of his good conduct and smartness. "I will send you back," the letter concluded, "as good a mechanic as ever went West."

But before a year had fully gone by, James was recalled home on account of the dangerous illness of his mother, and to his great grief arrived too late, she having died before his arrival.

The death of his wife was a great shock to the sturdy blacksmith. The strong frame and hearty laugh that had so long and so well withstood the

assaults of time, sorrow conquered with one blow. Who could have thought there was so gentle and loving a heart beneath that rough exterior.

James, who had made up his mind on no account to leave his father at this time, did almost all the work in the shop; and for months after his wife's death, it was pitiful to see the old man, on his return to his home in the evening, looking around unfamiliarly, yet with the loneliness death had brought to it.

"Can't you do anything for my father, doctor?" said James Allen to Doctor McGregor; "he mopes about all day, and he scarcely takes any sleep; he does not go to bed till near morning, thinking, I know, of poor mother. Oh! he's so changed, doctor. Is there no medicine that would do him good?"

"I have no faith in medicine, James, in his case," replied the doctor, "but much in kind attention and love. I know, my good boy, you are doing and will do all you can to help him and cheer him. Try and get him to work, and back to his old habits as much as possible. I will see him as often as I can, as a friend, and do my best to cheer him; poor fellow, I did not know that he was a man of such deep feeling; but we are all mysteries to each other, yes, even to ourselves, I believe."

"I miss my Martha, doctor," said John Allen, in a subsequent conversation with Doctor McGregor, "more and more every day; she was no great talker, for a woman, but for thirty years she never failed

to meet me when I returned home from the shop, with a pleasant smile and a loving word."

Two or three months after his wife's death, John Allen spoke to his son about the latter's returning to New York, but James would not hear of it. "He had learned as much of his trade as he needed," he said. He now seemed as anxious to stop at home as he was before to leave, and his father, guessing the cause, endeavored to respond to his son's filial affection, by wrestling with his grief and trying to be himself again; but it was only acting, after all. He worked in the shop, but the hearty laugh that used to accompany the ring of the hammer, was never heard; to him that ring had lost its music. Amid the flying sparks he saw an empty seat, a lonely home, and the six o'clock bell, once so welcome and cheery in its tones, sounded more like a dismal knell.

And so, when the spring had passed and come again, the old man, without any positive sickness, took to his bed, turned his face to the wall, and followed his wife. The day before his death he called James to his bedside.

"I will never rise, James," he said, "from this bed, and it is all the better, my boy. When our work is done here, God calls us. I have had a happy life, and I am thankful for it. The neighbors are so good and attentive, Jim, that they leave us seldom alone; but we are so now; kneel down, Jim, until you get your father's blessing. I am, to be sure, but an ignorant man, but it seems to me a

deal of knowledge comes to one when dying. I know, my boy, that the blessing I give you now will follow you through life. I dreamed last night, Jim, that your mother said to me, 'Bless our child.' Was it a dream? Who knows?"

While speaking he had, without any seeming effort, raised himself up in bed, and now, with hands extended over the bowed head of his sobbing child, he said, in slow, solemn tones:

"I bless you, God bless you, and he will."

Happy is it for the child who thus receives a dying parent's blessing, and deserves it.

After his father's death, James received a most warm invitation from Doctor McGregor, to take up his residence at the cottage, until he had settled on his future course, and to this invitation Robert's entreaties were added, but he could not be induced to leave the house that had been his home for so many years.

"Thank you all the same, Robert," he said. "You and your father must not be vexed at my refusal; but I will stop in my father's house until I leave it forever. To leave it right off would look like turning my back upon it, and the past, and I don't want to do that."

This was in the year 1848; and a few weeks after John Allen's death, the whole country became electrified at the news of the rich gold discoveries in California. Every mail brought to the town of P—— new and wonderful stories, and confirmation of former ones. The truth was, indeed, wonderful

enough, but exaggeration added such a coloring to it, that people got crazy in thinking of it. Following in hot haste the news of the discovery of the gold, came reports from every side, of parties organizing and starting for the gold fields—some by sea, and others by the overland route.

One of such an active, energetic temperament as James Allen could not escape the gold fever. Here was a field of adventure, a road to fortune open to him. But how to get there was the difficulty. His father had never laid up any money, and after selling out his good-will in the shop, paying some small debts, and collecting those due, James found himself master of about one hundred dollars, quite sufficient to bring him to New York, where he had intended to go to finish himself as a machinist. He would require at least three hundred dollars to enable him to join any one of the numerous parties now daily preparing to set off for the land of promise, by the overland route. Of so self-reliant and independent a nature, the thought of getting a pecuniary loan from Doctor McGregor or Robert never for a moment occurred to him, and when, with a flushed face and excited manner, he read to the latter some late accounts of the further discoveries of gold, and throwing down the paper, lamented his inability to make one of a party setting out on the 1st of the following month from St. Louis, he was totally unprepared for the offer which his expressed desire naturally led to.

"I shall be more than sorry, James," said Robert, "that we shall be parted; God knows for how long, may be for ever; for years, at all events, and but that I cannot leave my father, I would go with you; not that I care for this yellow dross, that is setting all you fellows mad; but if you have your heart set upon going, I see nothing to prevent you. You say you require but two hundred dollars; I will give you that sum; loan it to you, if your pride will not let you take a gift from your friend."

While Robert was speaking, James' eyes were opening wider and wider, but when the former concluded, by offering the required sum, young Allen's face flushed up to the roots of his red hair.

"I hope, Robert," he gasped, "you don't think that—"

"Oh, no, I don't," said Robert, interrupting him and laughing. "Pray, James, don't get up on your stilts. Very fortunate is it that you were such a numbskull, that an idea of my giving you the money never occurred to you; if it had, you would never have confided your wish to me—oh, you have a fine idea of what friendship means—but have gone off to New York and hammered away at your anvil, to make this sum, fretting and fuming all the time lest the gold should be picked up before you could get your share. Ah, James, how soon you have forgotten, and broken, indeed, in spirit, our compact made under Prince Charlie's tree."

"I have not forgotten it, Robert," said James, grasping the other's hand, "but—"

"Oh, hang your butts."

"Robert, I will not take this money from you; you will have to ask your father for it."

"Well, that's not much of an undertaking; come up to-night, and we will have his opinion on your proposed expedition—mind, the money question is settled—should you go, James, months must elapse, I suppose, ere we can hear from you."

"You will never hear from me, Robert, unless I am successful."

"What do you mean?"

"Don't think," James replied, "that I have been so long in your company, Master Robert, without being inoculated with some of your romance. I shall never return from California, unless as a successful man, and the first news you will have of me, will be from myself."

"But, James, think of the anxiety of your friends; will you be treating them generously?"

"Yes," said James, "I have friends, just two, yourself and your father; but, Robert, though I have no excuse to offer, let me have my little bit of romance. Our meeting, for I know I will return, will be all the pleasanter for it; and you must marry Lucie Evans, so as not to be lonely while I am away."

It was now Robert's turn to blush. "I have not seen Lucie for six months," he said; "perhaps if you were to tell her of your romantic plan of running off to California, and leaving no trace by which to find you out, she might be so taken with it as to

promise to wait for you until yourself or your ghost came back."

"You know, Robert, I withdrew my pretensions long ago, indeed ever since I burned my fingers, shoeing her sled, for you and her to ride on. I'm not going to burn my fingers any more."

Both laughed at those school remembrances; then Robert said, "Well, James, I shall expect you at the cottage this evening. You must put that stuff of not writing to us out of your head." But James did not; on this point he had made up his mind from the first. Doctor McGregor highly approved of his going, and as it was fixed that Robert was to accompany him as far as St. Louis, the two left for that city in time for James to get his outfit, and make all necessary preparations to be ready to start with the expedition leaving on the 1st of the month. When it did leave, Robert, on horseback, accompanied the party for the first day's march, and was glad to see that even in that short time the leader had recognized James' energy and smartness, and appointed him the following morning to a minor command in the motley army of adventurers.

Removed some distance from the party, James and Robert bid each other farewell, and it is no shame to their young manhood, to confess they cried in each other's arms; then Robert placed a rich gold chain, with a watch attached, around Jim's neck. "It is a present from my father, James," he said.

"I must hide it underneath my vest, Robert,

or they will say that I am a big-bug already," replied James, as his hand shook with the agitation he was endeavoring to command.

"My father told you, James, to dispose of it if you found it necessary; it is handier to carry than money. They are calling you. Oh, James, promise to write."

"I promise, Robert, to return," replied James Allen, wringing his friend's hand; and so they parted. How many years were to elapse before they met again, and then under what different circumstances.

One of the greatest blessings of youth is hope, a buoyant, brave hope, that can turn to the future with laughing eyes, and see not a shadow. Charles Lamb, I think it is, who says, that a man never realizes "that he himself is mortal, until he is past thirty years of age." Neither do we realize in youth that our hopes are mortal. Those that come to us in after life may have a more rational basis to rest on, but they are but lean ghosts compared to the lusty hopes of youth.

Robert McGregor returned from St. Louis in high good humor with his trip there, having not a doubt but that he would hear of or see James Allen within a year.

"Why," he said, "fellows had made fortunes in California in two weeks, and he'd back Jim against the smartest of them." And so, buoyed up with hope and youth's golden dreams, he returned to his home. Mayhap, some thought of pretty Lucie

Evans—that the words of James Allen had given the cue to—mixed up in his day-dreams, making those dreams still the sweeter.

On Robert's arrival home, his father proposed that they should spend the summer and fall in traveling. "I wish you to see some of the world, Robert," he said, "and to have the pleasure of showing it to you myself; not but that a younger companion would be more suitable." So to travel they went, avoiding New York, for special reasons connected with Mr. Wm. McGregor, the doctor's quipish brother; although, as Doctor McGregor remarked, "it was playing Hamlet, with the character of Hamlet left out." And all this time, at home or abroad, with the days, weeks and months passing pleasantly and tranquilly, there was no word spoken about Robert's choosing a profession or a business.

It was near Christmas when they returned to their home, and both received invitations to attend the examination in the public school, previous to the holidays. Robert attended, perhaps from a general interest in education, perhaps from a special interest in a certain little school teacher, with wavy hair—all her own, dear ladies—and blue eyes; at all events, towards the close of the day, he found himself chatting with Lucie Evans.

She had been a little embarrassed when she met him first that day, not knowing exactly how to address him; Mr. McGregor would be too formal, she thought, and how could she call that tall

young man whom she had not seen "oh, not for an age," Robert; so she said neither, but giving him her hand in her own frank way—which brought back the school-house hill fresh to Robert's mind—said, "How do you do; I am very glad to see you;" and now, as she stood there speaking to him, she found herself calling him Robert quite naturally.

"Did you not admire the way the classes answered, to-day, Robert?" she asked.

"No; I was admiring one of the teachers too much, to pay any attention to the classes."

"One of the teachers. Ah! that must be dear old Miss Dott; she will be quite pleased if you tell her so; but as she is a little deaf, you will have to speak somewhat loud."

"Oh, yes, to be sure," said Robert, "old Miss Dott; it is of course, Miss Dott; and I will remind her of the pleasant sleigh rides she and I used to have down hill."

"Of course you will," she answered, with an arch look; "but talking of sleigh rides, Robert, reminds me of poor Jim Allen; so he is gone to California; how did you two ever manage to part?"

"Oh, Jim had his heart set on going; but he will return soon, with lots of money, if any one will. He went to wish you good-by, did he not?"

"Yes, and spoke of you all the time."

"What did he say?"

Just at that moment Lucie recollected something that James did say, in reference to herself and Rob-

ert; her face became suffused with blushes that added to her beauty, and saying that she was wanted in another part of the room, she skipped away, leaving Robert nearly as much in love as when his heart used to thump against Lucie's back, as they rode down hill together, the previous long pull up hill, it must be confessed, having more to say to this heart action than love.

About this time Doctor McGregor set about improving his wild land near the town of P——, and employed a number of men to chop down the timber. In the spring he would clear up the brush and open a farm.

The question of Robert's future was settled in this way. He should be a gentleman farmer; and most acceptable was this solution to both father and son.

Robert, in truth, had no desire to acquire a profession, nor taste for commercial pursuits. Like his father, he was wanting in ambition; good and honorable, he was willing to live his life in the smooth water in which it had commenced, never dreaming of the storms and tempests which might overtake him. Had he been born a poor man's son, doubtless he would have been a worker, and with his intellect and noble disposition, a successful one. Had his father required his assistance, how cheerfully he would have labored; but there was no incentive to awaken his dormant energies, and so he settled down to enjoy life tranquilly, active only in one duty, which affection made light, to

make his father's declining years cheerful and happy.

"I had some thought, at one time, of your becoming a lawyer, Robert," said his father to him; "In its higher walks it is a noble profession. To protect the weak against the strong, to be the champion of innocence, the denouncer of wrong, to fearlessly drag the mask from guilt or hypocrisy—surely here is a role that may well make us envy the position of the gifted advocate; but the everyday pettifogging practice, the cunning tricks, the remorseless driving some poor fellow to the wall, the acquiescence in the prevarication and downright dishonesty of clients, the quirks and quibbles, the rejoicing when others weep, the arming oneself against pitiful appeals, until the heart becomes so hard as to need no extra protection against the voice of sorrow, the narrow groove in which the lawyer is compelled to travel, his duty to his clients, this everyday practice has a tendency to narrow the heart, blunt the conscience, and in a great measure destroy those generous promptings, that are the voices of angels speaking to the soul."

The spring arrived, and no word or letter from James Allen. Then Robert heard that the leader of James' party had returned to St. Louis, and was organizing another expedition.

So to St. Louis Robert went, hunted up the man, and heard from him about James up to a certain point. He had arrived safe, was the most useful and obliging man they had on the expedition, and

had set right off for the mines. "Hope he'll have luck," concluded the man, "and I'm sure he will; he's just the fellow to cut out his own luck." With this scrap of news Robert was fain to content himself, and to return home.

"The fellow will keep to his resolution of not writing, I fear," thought Robert; "well, perhaps that will make him return all the sooner."

This summer was a busy one for Robert; opening a farm was new work for him, and his father left it all in his hands; he frequently returned to the cottage in the evening, with face, hands, and clothes begrimed with the smoke of the burning brush he had been waging war on all day. On such occasions the doctor would very likely meet him with a smile, and tell him to hurry up and make himself admissible to the dinner table. After the evening meal, the doctor would take a walk among his beloved flowers for an hour or so; then returning to the house, the rest of the evening would be spent in discussing plans for the new farm, which was to be a model one—although it had not, as yet, assumed even the outlines of a farm—in talking over local news, or reading. A happy summer was this to Robert; he enjoyed all the pleasure of active employment, without any of its drudgery; and when he returned to his home each evening, peace and love met him at the threshold. Yet even then, the angel of death was hovering near that home, although not the tiniest shadow—oh, the blessedness of that veil drawn before

the future—told of the approach of its dark wings.

Early in October, Doctor McGregor came in from his garden one morning complaining of headache and chill, and within four days, the physician who had been called in, pronounced it to be a case of typhoid fever. The worst feature was, that from the first the patient himself gave up all hope of recovery. "He knew," he told the physician, "that this was to be his last illness; and then, ever mindful of others, he strove to prepare Robert's mind for the great change."

"Should I be taken from you, Robert, at this time," he said, "I know, my son, how great your sorrow will be; but let it not be that dismal grief that shuts out all light from the soul. My boy, we have been all and all to one another. How happy we have been, Robert, and should this illness prove fatal, think of this, and let not your grief amount to rebellion against that which is the will of God, and was to be expected in the course of nature, within a short time."

"Oh, father, you will recover," said Robert, endeavoring to master his own swelling grief, "Doctor Mitch says that the greatest danger is in your allowing those gloomy thoughts to take possession of your mind."

"Gloomy, my boy? I have thought of death every day for the last thirty years; Dr. Mitch speaks as a physician and materialist, but not as a Christian. He believes that death is the finis of

the book; I believe it is but the opening; we only read the preface here. Speaking to you thus, Robert, calms me rather than depresses me, though I could weep at the pain I give my boy; but you know, that doctors have often the best of motives for inflicting pain." Robert could not answer; he pressed his father's hand in silence.

"Listen to me, my son," continued the doctor. "I know how uncertain and changeable those fevers are, and how apt they are to affect the mind. You know all about our affairs, and you shall find—in case of the worst—all my papers regular."

"Oh, father, father, do not speak of such things."

"Well, no," replied the sick man, "there is no occasion. The Reverend Mr. Roache is in the house, you say?"

"Yes, father."

"Send him to me, and let us not be disturbed. Kiss me, my boy. Now go for a little while."

As the sick man seemed to have anticipated, his mind became affected on the eighth day of the fever, and continued so, with short intervals, up to his death. He was no longer in Michigan; the present and its near past were obliterated, and he was once more among the bluebells and heather of his native highlands, and his lost wife—his Annie—and "little" Rob' were by his side. Now in a boat on a lake, he saw the tempest coming up; but as he endeavored to take in sail, Annie clung around him and pinioned his arms, so that he could not move. "Look, Annie, there is the squall chasing along the

water; oh, let me out! oh God! You and 'little' Rob' will be drowned. There, the squall has struck the boat; down, down, down!" Again he, Annie, and "little" Rob' were on the table-land, overlooking the sea, and suddenly the wind rose and snatched the child from his side, bearing him along to the giddy cliff; and when he, the father, thought to follow, invisible hands pushed him back.

"Oh! mercy, my child, my child."

And now he, Annie, and "little" Rob'—poor sick brain, always Annie and "little" Rob' now—are walking through a dark, narrow passage in the old city of Edinburg, and William McGregor is endeavoring to steal up behind them—dirk in hand—to stab the child.

"Run, Annie; run, Rob." And bending over the pillow, with the hot tears almost blinding his vision, Robert McGregor would apply cooling lotions to his father's head, until those troubled visions would pass away, and reason return to the patient's eyes. Then Robert would be rewarded by a pressure of the hand, and the old smile of affection he was so familiar with.

But toward the close of Doctor McGregor's illness, although his mind still wandered, his delusions were no longer of the horrible, and they that watched knew by the low murmuring of endearing words, and fitful smiles hovering on the trembling lips, that the phantoms which visited the dying man were loving and gentle, like the life that was passing away.

It was evening. The sun dipping behind the forest, painted in innumerable colors the variegated autumn foliage; through the open window came the pure air, scarcely stirring the white curtains of the window. Outside, hopping along the gravel walks of the garden, the robins gave forth their short musical notes; inside, the old fashioned clock on the stair landing ticked-ticked the progress of time.

Doctor McGregor reclined in his son's arms. All that afternoon he had been sinking fast; now, gradually, his eyes opened wide, a look of ineffable love came to them.

"Kiss me, my boy," he whispered; and even as his son pressed his lips, the spirit of a just man, of a man who loved his fellow-man, went up to God.

PART V.

There is no period when inanimate nature has more direct influence upon us than when the young spirit is gradually emerging from the darkness of a first great sorrow into the light of returning happiness.

It is the providence of God that the sorrow of the young shall not be lasting. Eight months before, Robert McGregor had left his home, to wander, he cared not whither, his heart surcharged with sor-

row, and deeming that a shadow had fallen upon his life that never would pass away; and now, on a beautiful morning in the beautiful month of June, he found himself standing at the study window of his old home in P——, and despite the sadness he would call back, by looking at the mementos of his father scattered around—drinking in, with every emotion of the mind, with every pulse of the heart, with every thrill of his nerves, a tranquil happiness that came to him through the subtile agencies of light and air, flowers and perfume, tree and shrub, bird and song.

The garden, well cared for in his absence, was in a glow of beauty, and as he looked, the side gate opened and a young girl entered. She wore a spotless white muslin dress, a blue ribbon encircled her waist, and a rustic gipsy hat—from beneath which a cluster of brown curls fell over her neck—shaded her face. She moved deftly among the flowers, plucking one here and there, and commenced forming them into a bouquet, that she raised from time to time to her face, to inhale its sweet odor. Not knowing that she was observed, there was a graceful abandon in her movements, that well became her young innocent face, and in such perfect harmony with the scene was her presence there—that a new beauty seemed added to flower, shrub, and sunlight.

For a minute or two Robert McGregor remained looking at her, then going out the front door, he walked round to the side where she was still busy

making up her bouquet. Hearing a step on the gravel walk behind her, she carelessly looked over her shoulder, but the moment she recognized who it was that approached, she turned round with such a frightened start, while all color fled from her face, that Robert saw he had by his sudden appearance, seriously alarmed her. He hurried forward to take her hand, for she seemed, indeed, as if she wanted support.

"Why, Lucie," he said, pressing the little hand, "do you think it is my ghost you see?"

"Oh, no," she answered, "and I am very glad to see you; but I did not know you had returned. When did you arrive?"

"Last night. I was looking out of the window when you came into the garden, and I was so glad to see you, and so anxious to shake hands with you, that I suppose I rushed out of the house as if I was going to apprehend a burglar, and so frightened you; but the little Lucie Evans, that was my play-mate long ago, used not to be so easily scared."

By this time the blood had returned to Lucie's face, with a reinforcement of rosy blushes, and she hastened to explain to Robert how his housekeeper, Mrs. Cass, had invited her to cull a bouquet from the garden whenever she pleased, on her way to her school. "She saw me," said Lucie, "one morning, about a week ago, looking in, I suppose, most wishfully upon the flowers, and gave me the invitation. But it is so awkward that you should find me here."

"Oh, it is dreadful," replied Robert, smiling. "I wonder where I could find a constable. Don't be trying to destroy the evidence of your guilt, Lucie."

Poor Lucie was nervously pulling her fresh bouquet to pieces.

"You are teaching school still, Lucie?"

"Yes, and my aunt and all the family have emigrated to Iowa, and I am boarding at Mrs. Sims', and that is the way I come to pass by the cottage every morning on my way to the school-house."

"I hope my return, Lucie, will not prevent you from gathering your morning bouquet."

"Indeed it will, Mr. McGregor; nevertheless, I am very glad to see you home again."

"Mr. McGregor," repeated Robert.

"Well, no, Robert," she answered, putting out her hand frankly, "and now, good-morning; I shall be late in the school-room."

"I shall walk to the school-house with you, Lucie," said Robert. "I cannot part with you so soon; I want to ask so many questions."

"Tell me," he continued, as they left the garden together, "has there been any thing heard of James Allen?"

"I was going to ask you the same question, Robert. If any one was to hear from him, surely it would be you."

"So I might expect, but he has not written a line to me, and from a silly resolution he made, perhaps will not. But I was in hopes that, indirectly, some information about him might have reached P——."

"Not a word that I have heard," answered Lucie.

"Did he know of my poor father's death, James, I am sure, would give up his foolish whim, and write or come to me."

Lucie looked into the face that had become in a moment thoughtful and sad.

"Robert," she said, in a subdued voice, "I felt so sorry for you when you lost your father."

"I know you did, my good little Lucie," he answered. "I did not know fully what a good man he was, until I lost him. I knew, indeed, how kind and loving he was to myself, but, Lucie, after his death a crowd of people, the poor settlers around, came to me, each telling what the doctor had done for him. It seems they were all under a promise never to divulge any of his acts of benevolence during his lifetime; but absolved by his death from their promises, they told their various stories: how he had helped one to buy a farm, another to pay off a mortgage. There were a number of families he was in the habit of giving warm clothing to coming on winter, and so on. His benevolence knew no bounds, Lucie; I am proud of having had such a father."

By this time they had reached the school-house entrance, and both paused; Lucie's face had become sad from sympathy, as she listened to Robert, speaking of his father, and as the young man looked upon it now, he felt love's passion kindling in his heart, even more rapidly than when a little

while before in the garden, he admired it in its fresh, smiling beauty.

"Well, Lucie," said he, as they parted, if I am not to expect you will steal any more flowers, you cannot prevent me from presenting you with some."

She gave him a friendly nod of acquiescence, and tripping up the broad steps of the school-house, passed in, while Robert returned to the cottage as much in love as it is necessary for a young gentleman of one or two-and-twenty to be.

While Robert McGregor and Lucie were speaking in the garden, there were four pairs of eyes intently watching them from the large brick house on the opposite side of the way. This house belonged to a Mr. Flitters, and the four pairs of eyes were those of Mrs. Flitters and the three Misses Flitters.

This family had come to P—— after the death of Doctor McGregor, and while Robert was away, Mrs. Flitters, by sundry conversations with Mrs. Cass, the housekeeper, had made herself familiar with a good many details of the McGregor family, some of which were vastly interesting to a lady with three marriageable daughters. For instance, Doctor McGregor had left his son quite well off. The young man was of prepossessing appearance, "and quite green, I should judge," remarked Mrs. Flitters, as she retailed the information she had gathered, to her husband.

This gentleman may be regarded as the founder of the Flitters family, as none of its members were

known to the fashionable circles of the Bowery, in New York, until his time. He was one of those brainless little men that are always fortunate in money matters, without either themselves or anybody else being able to tell why. He had set himself down on a high stool behind the counter of a small grocery store, in the Bowery, New York, and money came to him, and stuck to him like barnacles to a rock. Even a spendthrift wife, with a Roman nose and a lofty ambition, characteristic of such a magnificent organ, could not destroy his prosperity; she was a heavy drain upon the till, but the money came in faster than she could take it out, and every year it increased.

Shrewd, intelligent men, making commercial pursuits a science, went into the market every day to buy, and were frequently ruined. But when, without any calculation or forethought, Flitters bought a large quantity of sugar, lard, butter, or anything else in his line of business, the article he purchased was sure to run up forthwith to a high figure. In his dealings he was strictly honest, and saving in expenses, unless where Mrs. Flitters was concerned.

There was a strong conviction in his befogged little mind, introduced there, perhaps, by the Roman nose, that Mrs. Flitters was a superior being, requiring a good many extras, which it was his duty to supply, and which she was very likely to take anyhow, and as he was, in his mild, undemonstrative way, proud of his wife, and there was really nothing

mean or sordid in his nature, he let her have her own way in every thing, and was as happy as it was possible for a simple, timid little man to be, who was the owner of such a high-blooded animal as Mrs. Flitters. Consequently, when Mrs. Flitters proposed that they should sell out in New York, in order to get rid of the "Bowery trash," as she expressed it, "and move out West, where their money would get them into society, and where the girls would get first-class husbands," Richard Flitters made no objection. He sold out his business stock to great advantage—the man who stepped into his shoes becoming a bankrupt in a very short time afterward—came on with his family to P——, bought the brick house opposite Inverness Cottage, for a dwelling, opened a large grocery and provision store in P——, and the same good luck that attended him heretofore, continued with him. Within three months after he had opened his store, he was doing the largest business of any trader in town.

Mr. Flitters was a smooth, polished little man on the outside. He had sleek, black hair, cut close, and coming straight down on the upper part of his forehead. On the top of his head was a polished, bald spot. His face was round, shining, and without a wrinkle. He had rosy cheeks, and mild, pleading brown eyes. Never was there another grocery and provision dealer with such an innocent face, and mercantile bummers, on entering his well stocked store for the first time, were apt to mistake him for

a junior clerk, and ask to see Mr. Flitters. Then Mr. Flitters' hand would seek the bald spot on the top of his head, pass from thence gently down his face, and the brown eyes emerging from the palm of his hand, would seemingly appeal in the gentlest manner possible, for mercy, while Mr. Flitters would mildly answer, "That's my name, sir; what is your pleasure?" His family, when he arrived in P——, consisted of his wife, three grown up daughters, and a little son of about six years of age. In personal appearance Mrs. Flitters might be said literally to stand out in strong contrast to her husband; but that I cannot forget I am attempting to portray the personal appearance of an estimable lady, I would say bluntly that Mrs. Flitters was built for strength. Mr. Flitters was heard to say in confidence to friends, that Mrs. Flitters was an able woman, but whether he meant mentally or physically, was never known. She was tall and robust, with a stern, but by no means homely face. Her eyes were grey, and her large Roman nose made them appear somewhat too small; she used to say that this style of nose was hereditary in her family; though who her grandfather was, was as great a mystery to the good lady as the pyramids of Egypt. The female portion of the Flitters family brought to their new home the polish of the Bowery, with the assumption of Fifth Avenue, and thus armed, landed in the West, like Cæsar in Gaul, prepared to conquer.

Before going west, Mrs. Flitters had been deluded

by a Bowery legend, to the effect that young English noblemen, tired of the pomps and restraints of a court, frequently came to this country in disguise, and sought adventure and freedom in our Western States and Territories, and there was more than one instance in the annals of Bowery romance, where one of those noble scions of the English aristocracy, had in his assumed humble character of an American citizen, wooed and won a fair Western maiden, and returning with her to England, knocked her all of a heap—in Bowery parlance—by leading her through a long line of gorgeous liveried menials in plush breeches, up to his baronial castle, where he welcomed her as its mistress; while his lady mother, the aged duchess, with a jeweled turban on her venerable head, imprinted a maternal kiss upon her plebeian cheek.

Since her arrival in the West, Mrs. Flitters had seen no evidence of the presence of the English nobleman, but she was greatly interested in the details she heard from Mrs. Cass, of the McGregor family.

The young man was expected home soon. It was not likely he would go into society while he was away, and he would, no doubt, be still in bad spirits on his return home, predisposed, in fact, to fall in love; melancholy people were always the most likely to fall in love; Lord Byron was always melancholy, and always falling in love. They should certainly make this young man's acquaintance the moment he returned, and bestow upon

him all their sympathy. So reasoned and thought Mrs. Flitters.

And here was the young man returned home without their knowing a word about it, receiving sympathy from somebody else, and it seemingly doing him good, too.

Mrs. Flitters and her daughters had not the slightest doubt but that the person dressed in black, and speaking to Lucie Evans, was Robert McGregor, and they would have continued to watch every movement and gesture of the two, who were quite unconscious of the four pairs of eyes gazing at them—but that a sudden scream from the heir of the house of Flitters, who had tumbled off the high chair he had climbed up, in order to add another pair of eyes to the Flitters group—diverted their attention.

While Mrs. Flitters was endeavoring to repair her shattered idol, who continued to scream and kick violently, Robert and Lucie had passed out of the garden, down the street, and in a little while the former was seen returning alone to the cottage. More than once he was seen in the garden, during the day, and from inquiries, judiciously made, there was no longer any doubt of his identity.

On his return, in the evening, Mr. Flitters was made acquainted with the interesting fact of Robert's return home, and it was settled in family council that Mr. Flitters, before going down town to his business, the next day, should call on the young gentleman at the cottage.

"You can go over about ten o'clock," said Mrs. Flitters, "and apologize for calling so early, by stating your having to go to business."

"Early," repeated Mr. Flitters, who was in the habit of getting up about five, and thought ten rather far advanced in the day.

"Early for visitors, Flitters," remarked the able woman, reprovingly. "Perhaps you had better give him an invitation to take tea with us after to-morrow. Ask him just in an off-handed way, not to stand on ceremony we are such near neighbors. And say, of course he will only meet the family; 'All in the family way, you know.' You will of course bring your card with you, and present it to Mr. McGregor."

"Yes, my dear," said her husband, driving his hand into his side pocket, and producing a large business card, from which he commenced reading: "Family groceries, lard, butter, eggs—"

"Stop," exclaimed Mrs. Flitters. Flitters' hand at once sought the bald spot on the top of his head, went sliding smoothly along, made the turn down, and when the brown eyes appeared again, they were quite prepared to say: "May it please the court, I acknowledge myself guilty, and throw myself upon the mercy of the court."

"Is it possible," said Mrs. Flitters, "you would present that card in paying a visit?"

"It is the new card, my dear, I got it yesterday; the printers do mighty good work here in the West."

"But, Flitters, that is not a visiting card; Polly,

bring me my card-case ; here are the proper cards ; you remember I made you get them before you left New York."

"MR. RICHARD FLITTERS."

"I have been paying all your visits for you since we came here, and now you must pay one for yourself."

"Very well, my dear ; but I think this other card would be more explan—"

"Flitters!"

"Yes, my dear."

"Don't provoke me."

"No, my dear ;" and the family council broke up, Flitters trotting back to his store, in the best of good humor, to enter some invoices, as it was decreed that he was to lose one or two business hours the next day by his intended visit to his neighbor."

"I wish Mrs. Flitters," he thought, as he trotted along, "had fixed the time for this visit at about half past six in the morning, but she knows best."

The next morning Robert was out in his garden early, and had a bouquet ready to hand Lucie when she was passing ; but she did not make her appearance, and he, disappointed, lingered out of doors until the hour for Flitters' visit had arrived. Punctual to the minute, the little man left his house, crossed over the street, and entered the garden. Seeing him do so, Robert advanced, while all the members of the Flitters family in the house, intently watched the meeting, Mrs. Flitters having

a tight hold of Master Flitters by the waist, to prevent a renewal of yesterday's accident.

"Oh, look, Anna Maria," exclaimed Mrs. Flitters, in her excitement giving short jerks to Flitters Jun., who, in his turn, commenced striking out frantically at his sister Polly's head, it being the nearest head to him, "Look, there is your pa standing before the young man, with his hat off, like a menial."

It was true, in all cases of emergency Flitters had to seek inspiration from the bald spot on the top of his head, and as he could not get at it through the crown of his hat, he had taken the latter off.

Having passed his hand along its usual line of travel, he felt much more at his ease, and Robert was at once prepossessed by the brown eyes, and innocent round face, turned up to his.

"I believe I am addressing Mr. McGregor," said the little man.

"Yes, sir," answered Robert.

"My name is Flitters," continued the little man, fumbling in his pocket for the card. "I have called by the direc—ahem—I have called to see you."

"Very kind of you, Mr. Flitters," said Robert, putting out his hand ; "how do you do, sir ; we are near neighbors, I find, Mr. Flitters, and hope we shall be good ones. Pray come into the house," and Robert ushered his visitor into the parlor. "Be seated, sir," he continued ; "you are in business here, I believe, Mr. Flitters, I think I passed by your store yesterday."

"Yes," replied Flitters; "family groceries, provisions, butter, lard; I deal in live feathers, too."

"Indeed," said Robert, bowing his head as if this was a very interesting piece of information to him.

"He's a very nice young man," thought Mr. Flitters, "and not a bit uppish." Then he delivered his wife's invitation to Robert, to take tea with them the following evening. "No one but ourselves, Mr. McGregor," he concluded.

"I am sure I am very much obliged to you and Mrs. Flitters," said Robert, "and certainly will do myself the pleasure of calling and making the acquaintance of Mrs. Flitters; but I think you must excuse me for to-morrow evening."

With a rapid gesture Mr. Flitters went behind his hand, and when the brown eyes were again visible, they were filled with sorrow and apprehension.

"Mrs. Flitters will be greatly disappointed," he said.

"Oh! as you are so kind as to say so," said Robert, "why, I will not disappoint her, I will go over. At what hour did you say?"

"Half-past six," answered his visitor, rising briskly, and bidding Robert a cheerful good-morning, he hurried to his house to be delayed a quarter of an hour longer from business, in detailing to Mrs. Flitters the result of his visit, and answering some leading questions which suggested themselves to the mind of that very able woman.

When Robert McGregor rang the bell, the following day, at Mrs. Flitters', the door was opened by a servant-maid, who showed him into the sitting-room, telling him at the same time, that Mr. Flitters had not as yet returned from the store, but she would inform Mrs. Flitters of his, Robert's, arrival.

In the middle of the room was Master Flitters, endeavoring to build a house with blocks. The moment the door was shut, he stopped his work, and looking at Robert, said, "I know who you are."

"Intelligent boy," said Robert, who was too young to be an admirer of precocious babyhood. "Well, who am I, Solomon?"

"I aint Solomon, but I know who you are."

"Well, who?"

"You're the man that lives in the cottage, and you're going to marry Polly."

Robert was still laughing at the answer, when the door opened, and there sailed into the room, like a proud frigate with three full rigged schooners in her wake, Mrs. Flitters and the Misses Flitters.

With a dignified air the lady of the house advanced and extended her hand to Robert, as she said, "Mr. McGregor, I am very happy to make your acquaintance, very kind of you to come to us without any ceremony; Mr. Flitters will be here immediately. My daughters, Mr. McGregor, Anna Maria, Louisa Jane, and Polly."

"My intended," thought Robert, as he bowed to the young ladies; "well, she is the prettiest of the lot."

Presently Mr. Flitters came home, and shortly afterwards they all adjourned to supper, where Mrs. Flitters presided with great dignity, engrossing much of the conversation, while the young ladies smiled and exchanged glances, and Flitters strictly attended to what brought him to table.

"You take sugar, Mr. McGregor?" asked the hostess.

"Sugar is rising," said Mr. Flitters, looking up from his plate.

Mrs. Flitters turned one look upon him; he laid his fork down, the brown eyes became filled with an expressive plea for mercy, and then, seemingly with fresh appetite, Mr. Flitters renewed his attack upon the viands before him.

"And how do you like the West, Mrs. Flitters?" asked Robert.

"Oh, pretty well, Mr. McGregor; it would not do to tell you, a Western gentleman, anything else; but we miss the society of Fifth Avenue, Mr. McGregor, don't we, Anna Maria?"

"I should think so, ma," replied the young lady appealed to.

"I miss the Bowery, Mr. McGregor, I can tell you," said Mr. Flitters, quite sincerely. Mrs. Flitters gave him a glance, but her husband was at that moment particularly engaged with a piece of beefsteak on his plate, and did not notice it, so the lady said in explanation:

"Mr. Flitters kept a store in the Bowery, at one time, Mr. McGregor."

"Yes, and a mighty small store at one time; ha, ha, ha," said Flitters, jocosely.

There are some people that eating, like the moderate use of wine, exhilarates. Flitters was a full blooded, healthy little man, with a fine appetite and healthy digestion, and the succulent beefsteak he was eating, warmed him up, made him feel good, and careless of consequences; but no sooner had that reckless laugh passed his lips, than a premonitory cough brought him sitting straight up in his chair; Mrs. Flitters' grey eyes were fixed upon him. Mrs. Flitters' Roman nose pointed at him. The beefsteak intoxication passed away, his hand sought the inspiring bald spot, then slowly passed down his face, and the brown eyes resignedly put in the plea of guilty on every count, immediately after which, Flitters commenced briskly to help himself and Flitters Jun., to large slices of pound cake.

By the time supper was over, Flitters Jun. had fallen into a profound sleep, and was thus disposed of for the rest of the evening, and Robert and the young ladies retired to the drawingroom, where the two oldest Misses Flitters sang and played duets on the piano—Mrs. Flitters having whispered to Robert to insist on their doing so—while Polly, her long black curls now and then brushing his hand, showed him her album—a cunning artifice by which she was enabled to take advantage of her sisters behind their backs, "just like Polly," said Louisa Jane, afterwards. Altogether, Robert spent a very pleasant evening. He had never mixed in

what is called society. Yet, accustomed to the quiet refinement of his own home, and to the ease of manner of an educated gentleman, like his father, he was not for a moment deceived by the over done fashionable airs of Mrs. Flitters; but neither was he inclined to be a very severe critic, for he was flattered by the attention he received, and consequently disposed to be pleased.

When he rose to leave, Mr. Flitters, emerging from a corner where he had been enjoying a comfortable nap, proposed to walk across to the cottage with him. When they reached the gate, Robert opened it and asked Mr. Flitters to enter, but he would not, so the two stopped a few minutes leaning on the fence and chatting. Just as Flitters was about returning, he looked over at his house, and seeing the door shut, and judging that Mrs. Flitters was safely on the other side out of hearing, he pulled his business card out of his pocket, and presenting it to Robert, said, "Drop into the store, Mr. McGregor, and if you want anything in our line, we will be happy to supply you. Family groceries, provisions, lard, butter, soap, rope. Good-night, good-night."

There is no positive record of Robert McGregor dreaming of Polly Flitters that night, but it is certain that it was Lucie Evans, his old schoolmate, he was thinking of when he awoke the next morning. He had not seen her now for two days. The flowers he had gathered for her were lying on his dressing table faded, and Robert fixing his eyes

upon them, endeavored to get himself into a poetic melancholy, by repeating, "Faded flowers, faded hope." But whether it was that he could not find a line to correspond with this one, or that in trying to get a word to rhyme with hope, Flitters' enumeration of family groceries, soap, rope, &c., the night before occurred to him, or that his youthful spirit, overflowing with animal life, would not be tamed down—whatever the cause, he suddenly broke forth into a merry laugh, and tossing the bedclothes aside, jumped up and commenced to dress.

"It was very ridiculous of me," thought Robert, as he hurriedly dressed, "to suppose that Lucie would be coming round here to receive bouquets from my hand; the little gipsy must have taken the lower street on her way to her school. It is certainly my business to call to see her; I will be just in time to pull a few flowers, meet her before she leaves Mrs. Sims, and have a walk with her to the school-house. She is the only one I can have any pleasure in talking over the happy past with, the only one left that had any share in that past. What a queer matched pair Mr. Flitters and his wife are. I like the little man, but he is terribly hectored, and the two oldest girls are the image of their mother. Certainly I am very much obliged to that interesting child—who has such a capacity for pound cake—for selecting Polly for me. Will there be anything strange in my calling on Lucie so early? Oh, no, we are old schoolmates. I sup-

pose she has lots of admirers. Of course she has, for she is downright beautiful."

Robert was just in time to meet Lucie as she was leaving the house, and the blush and smile with which she greeted him, well repaid him for his short walk.

"I have brought you the flowers, Lucie, that you would not come for," he said.

"I am very much obliged to you," she answered, taking them from his hand, "oh, how beautiful! why, Robert, you have shown excellent taste in your selection."

"Well, you know, Lucie, I have always displayed good taste, even at school." The emphasis with which this was said, and the look which accompanied it, brought another bright blush to the girl's face. And so, happy in the sunshine of the young day, and the sunshine of their young lives, shining through the glamour of first love, they chatted and walked, side by side, until they reached the school-house, where they parted as on the former occasion.

For the next two weeks or so, Robert usually met Lucie in the morning, and walked with her to the school-house; and when vacation came, they had many a stroll together to places in the neighborhood that were favorite resorts of Robert and James Allen in their boyhood years.

On these occasions, Robert McGregor spoke frequently of his father and James Allen, and indeed, the young lovers—for lovers they surely were—

seemed, in their words and thoughts, to be busy with the past rather than the present or future.

This state of feeling in lovers may be termed the luxury of melancholy—the Indian summer of love, with its soft, warm, hazy atmosphere, through which a gentle happiness pulsates, and like the Indian summer of our northern clime, it is ever too beautiful and calm to last long. In position, these two young people were singularly independent of Mrs. Grundy. They had no one's wishes to consult, no particular or exclusive set to please or vex, and in means, Robert was equally independent. In his daily intercourse with Lucie at this time, he never broke out into passionate words of love, nor had he asked her to be his wife. Respect for his father's memory kept his lips sealed for the present, but he felt in his heart how truly he loved her, was conscious that his love was returned, and looked forward without doubt to the time when he should call her his wife. Under the guise of the best of friends, they were the best of lovers.

I have said that Robert McGregor and Lucie Evans were singularly independent of Mrs. Grundy, a fact that was very aggravating to the old lady, so she set about doing them as much harm as she could. They were not so far beyond her reach but that she could make them feel uncomfortable and unhappy for the time being. What mortal is?

Mrs. Flitters was the primary mover on the part of society. From the time of making Robert McGregor's acquaintance she had been unremitting

in what she termed, "delicate attention," and as Robert really liked Mr. Flitters, he frequently called on the latter after business hours, to have a friendly chat or to bring him over to the cottage, where Flitters would surreptitiously enjoy a mild cigar, and then by rinsing his mouth with water, eating cloves, and taking other precautionary measures, endeavor to destroy all evidence of his dissipation before returning to the family domicile.

Mrs. Flitters perceived from the first that of the girls, Robert evidently preferred Polly, and though, as a match-making mother, she would have wished to hand out her daughters in regular rotation, beginning with Anna Maria, to expectant young men with good prospects, still she made up her mind to submit without a murmur to circumstances, and to bestow Polly on Robert McGregor. Nor were there any objections to be apprehended on the part of Polly to this arrangement; consequently, when Robert called, she was left alone with him as much as possible. As possible, I say, for the stupidity of Flitters did much to counteract the strategic movements of that able woman, Mrs. Flitters; he was continually appearing at the wrong time. His habit of going off with Robert to spend the evening at the cottage, showed a callous disregard to the interests of his family, which was most disheartening. On such occasions, Mrs. Flitters would remark to her daughters, "Of course, my dears, the young man would have spent the evening here had not your father dragged him off."

The abject repentance of Flitters, when reproved for his conduct, and his lively promptness to commit the same offence at the first opportunity, were evidences going to show that a permanent change of heart was not to be expected from him; but despite Flitters playing the part of a Marplot, Polly and Robert had plenty of opportunity to become intimate friends; how pretty she used to look, when, at the suggestion of the parent bird, she fluttered across the street, and perching on the first rail of the board fence, begged of Robert, in the garden, "just a few of those beautiful flowers." Those little, flying visits, made at first at the suggestion of her mother, were continued by Polly from inclination, until the poor girl had almost given away her heart before she discovered that she had no return. And love, that blinds to all else, made her vision clear in this. The moment she began to love, she saw that Robert did not. He flirted with her, romped with her, played with her, but he did not love her. His very familiarity and self-possession in her presence, his pleasant, indifferent manner at their parting or meeting, showed that he regarded her as a pleasing acquaintance, one whom he would likely come to esteem as a friend, but only as a friend. More than this, scarcely had love dawned in her heart, than by intuition she surmised that Robert McGregor loved somebody else, and this surmise she confided—not without a few little sobs heroically kept under restraint—to her mother.

Poor Polly!

This information started Mrs. Flitters on a tour of discovery. Remembering the first morning she saw Robert in his garden speaking to a young lady, she started from that point, and had no difficulty in finding out who Lucie was, and the great intimacy that existed between herself and Robert. Indeed, when she went seeking information on these points, such a flood of light poured in from all the news-mongers' lanterns, that the only wonder was, she had not heard all about Lucie and Robert long before.

"They were seen frequently walking together in all outlandish places, since school closed, and before that he walked with her to the school-house every morning since his return home."

"Oh, such goings on, Mrs. Flitters," concluded another gossip, "I hope all will end well, but that Lucie Evans was always a bold, forward thing."

Number three gossip, "Knew very well that if Doctor McGregor was alive, he would not allow his son to be keeping company with the niece of a woman that took in washing when she lived in P——." And number four gossip, "Hoped at one time, my dear Mrs. Flitters, that Robert McGregor's becoming intimate with your respectable family, might lead to a match between him and one of your sweet girls. It would be such a suitable match in every way."

Whereupon the Roman nosed matron, taken off her guard by the honeyed flattery of these words, revealed the secret of her maternal bosom, in regard

to Polly and Robert, to number four, and the latter rewarded this feminine confidence in a truly feminine way, by putting on her sun-bonnet the moment Mrs. Flitters disappeared round the corner of the street, and hastening to Lucie Evans with an embellished and exhaustive report of what "she said" and "she said," until it appeared to poor Lucie that all the female tongues in P—— were suddenly let loose, and in full cry after a little orphan girl, that had never as much as hurt a fly intentionally.

Leaving Lucie in a satisfactory state of unhappiness, number four returned to the bosom of her family, with a complacent consciousness of having done her duty, and the next Sunday Mrs. Grundy went to church and sang the Doxology.

The same day that Lucie had heard of the great interest that Mrs. Flitters and other good ladies in P—— were taking in her welfare, Robert called to bring her out to walk, and very soon perceived that something was the matter. In meeting him, her manner was restrained and confused, and as he looked anxiously in her face, he detected signs of tears.

"Something has distressed you, Lucie," he said; "tell me what it is, my little girl."

"I think I shall, Robert," she answered, as the tears came swimming into her eyes, and her face crimsoned. "You are my only friend here, and I will tell you, although it is hard, and I don't know how to do it. You won't misjudge me?"

"Will you misjudge me, Lucie, by asking such a question?"

"No," she answered, "I will not;" and then she told him about the inquiries Mrs. Flitters had been making among her lady friends, and all the reports and insinuations which that able woman had set afloat.

Lucie hurried over the recital, now and then catching her breath to prevent a sob, but when she came to speak of the happiness that Mrs. Flitters had intended for Robert, by becoming his mother-in-law, Lucie stole a glance at her lover, and a quizzical smile parted the lips that had been quivering the moment before.

And what did Robert say to all this? Well, nothing in words, but with a pleasant, joyous laugh, that blew Mrs. Flitters and all the gossips of P— clear off into space, he drew Lucie toward him, and encircled her in his arms, while she rested her head upon his bosom in the ecstasy of first love revealed. "And now, Lucie," said Robert, as he imprinted a kiss upon her lips, be off and get your bonnet, and we will pay a visit to Mrs. Flitters, or, if you like it better, we will take a walk to Prince Charlie's tree."

And beneath the broad-leafed branches of Prince Charlie's tree, on whose trunk the jackknives of the boys—Robert McGregor and James Allen—had cut Lucie's name when she was their little playmate at school, the youth and maiden sat, weaving in the sunlight of youth their bright woof of love,

happily unconscious in this, the summer of their lives, of the winter whose tempests should dim its colors and test its strength.

The delicious prattle of lovers is silly jargon to other ears, but it is necessary that I should give a portion of Lucie's and Robert's conversation, which took place during a lucid interval.

"Out of respect to the memory of my dear father," said Robert, "I did not intend, Lucie, to ask you to be my wife for some time longer, but our friends have made it necessary to hasten our happiness. Your idea of paying a visit to your good aunt, who wishes you to do so, is excellent. Be sure I will soon follow you. I will spend the summer and fall in roving over those broad prairies we hear so much of, and then, darling, we will begin the new year as man and wife."

Here followed an insane interval, the incidents of which are only known to the squirrels that squatted on the overhanging branches and watched the happy lovers.

"And you will not be ashamed to take me from so poor a house as my aunt's, Robert?" asked Lucie.

"No, Lucie, and the busybody spoke false who said, as it was reported to you, that if my father lived he would not consent to my marrying you. My dear father," continued Robert, with a heightened color, "was a true republican in all his ideas; he honored labor, scorned what was mean in prince or peasant alike, and prized worth, honesty and intel-

ligence wherever he found them. And who are the Flitters', do you think, Lucie?"

"Well, no," continued Robert, laughing, "I don't believe that even to you I ought to divulge the confidence Flitters reposed in me when he found himself beyond the ken of the old eagle; oh! if she knew she would swoop down upon the poor little man's shining bald head," and again Robert laughed heartily; "I half suspect, Lucie," he continued, "that once upon a time, and no distant time either, a certain near relative of Mrs. Flitters was in the habit of paying business visits to the ash barrels in a certain district in the Bowery in New York; Oh, it is too ridiculous; come along, little girl, set about packing your trunk when you get home, and be off to Iowa, or Bowery Uppertendom will crush you under the wheels of its spick-and-span new carriage.

In the commencement of the new year, Robert McGregor and Lucie Evans were married in Iowa, and after a short bridal trip, returned to P——, to commence housekeeping at the cottage. At this time Robert was worth thirty thousand dollars in cash, and about twenty thousand in real estate. "Sufficient for all their wants," he said to Lucie, "and so they would live happy and tranquil, letting others strive after wealth and fame, to find how barren and cold the goal was when reached."

Lucie kissed her young philosopher, and the idyl of their lives ran so smoothly into the prose that they were unconscious of the change.

Among their first visitors was the Flitters family. Mrs. Flitters was altogether too old a campaigner to show any evidence of chagrin at the manner in which her matrimonial plans were defeated. So, as I have said, she and the Misses Flitters were among the first to call and tender their congratulations to the young couple.

If you wanted evidence of christian forgiveness and love, you should have heard the detonating smack with which Mrs. Flitters saluted the bride's cheek. Then Anna Maria and Lousia Jane followed suit; but Polly merely shook hands, and Lucie felt better pleased with the warm pressure of her soft hand, than with the metallic kisses that might as well have been bites. With their hands clasped, the bride and Polly stood for a moment looking into each others eye's, and from that time forth they were friends, and very true and dear friends, as time advanced.

PART VI.

As time sped on, Robert McGregor was by no means as popular in P—— as his father had been; nor indeed did he deserve to be so.

Doctor McGregor had been an enterprising, useful, benevolent citizen; but with his son, the old day-dreaming habits of the boy remained with the

man, and though he fully inherited his father's goodness of heart, he lacked the opportunity which the latter's profession afforded, for active benevolence. With the exception of improving the farm he had opened shortly before his father's death, he embarked in no business, and as yet the expenses of this farm exceeded the returns. But this did not give him any uneasiness, as his income was quite sufficient for his modest way of living. Quiet, gentlemanly, sensitive, and reserved, unless in his own house, where he was prodigal of his smiles and laughter, he was far more popular with the poor than the rich, and the former, with whom he was much freer, understood him better.

In Europe, living on his estate, he would have been a model gentleman; living in his Western home, on his income, which he neither diminished nor increased, he was looked upon, by his neighbors, as an idle gentleman, a very unpopular character in the West, ranking far beneath a successful knave.

As he had money, the politicians of P—— made advances to him. "He was just the man they wanted." "They would send him to Congress." But Robert McGregor had no taste for politics, nor ambition to go to Congress, so he declined their advances, and thereby saved his money and reputation. The only one redeeming point that the public of P—— saw in the man was, that for public enterprises, town improvements, and good objects, he was always most liberal with his money.

So the busy, active, little world of P—— settled down to let him have his own way, neutral in regard to him in its like or dislike. If a loving, happy home is a desirable thing, Robert McGregor's way was not a bad one after all, and if the public of P—— had little difficulty in discovering his imperfections, his wife had still less in finding out his perfections. Nor did the charge of idleness lie at his door, when he worked under Lucie's supervision in the garden; but then in pushing work through, there is a great deal in a boss, and such a boss as Robert had. The love-light in her blue eyes, her laugh that set all the birds a singing, the clapping of her little hands when a piece of work was successfully gone through, were all equal to draughts of wine to the laborer, and very often during the day did he rest upon his garden spade, and look at the boss, and very often during the day did the boss refresh him.

I strongly suspect that a good deal of Robert's unpopularity was caused by the jealousy of those fellows who had shrews at home, and envied him his happiness.

The second summer Robert worked in the garden he had two bosses, "baby and I." But the new boss was only a sleeping partner in the concern, and as his judgment could not be depended upon, it was fortunate he never gave it.

At this period of his life, Robert McGregor enjoyed as much happiness as can fall to the lot of a human being, and the principal drawback to that

happiness, was his anxiety to hear of, or from James Allen. "What had become of him; was he dead, or did he altogether forget his early friend?" These were questions that Robert and Lucie frequently discussed, without being able to arrive at any satisfactory conclusion, with the exception that they acquitted James of want of friendship. We are all apt to judge others by ourselves, and as Robert's friendship for James was as warm now as when he bade him farewell, he never doubted but that the latter's sentiments also remained unchanged. "No; the poor fellow was dead, or being unsuccessful in California, kept his foolish resolve of not writing—which was it?"

Robert often almost resolved to set out for California in quest of his friend, but to this, Lucie objected, and his own disinclination to leave his family for the time such a journey would occupy, and the distance it would separate him from them, made him not urge the point. Was he unmarried, he would assuredly have gone in search of James, and finding him, have told him that he, Robert, had enough for both.

Although Robert was prevented from making personal search for the friend he never ceased to think of and love, he was unceasing in his inquiries in every quarter where he thought it at all likely he might obtain some clue that would lead to the information he sought. He had several advertisements inserted in the California papers, and even when seven years had elapsed since James'

departure, he still kept up his inquiries. Not, perhaps, that he had really much faith in these efforts, as that by them he strove not to allow all hope to abandon him.

During the first five years of Robert's marriage, with the exception of the birth of three children, respectively named Robert, James, and Mary, no incidents occurred to break in upon the tranquil life of happiness he had seemingly mapped out for himself. He had launched his boat upon a summer sea, never giving thought to the storm that might arise, and consequently was all unprepared when its force actually broke upon him; the young passengers that came on board from time to time, but made the voyage the more pleasant.

The second boy was named after James Allen, and the little girl after Polly Flitters, who was her godmother.

Polly was now the only unmarried daughter left in the brick house opposite; yes, fate had smiled on that able woman, Mrs. Flitters, and robbed her of her two oldest daughters, within three years after the family had settled in P——. They were taken off in regular order after all, which fact mollified Mrs. Flitters' feelings towards the inmate of the cottage very much. The first to go off was Anna Maria, who married a young man who had been clerking for Mr. Flitters, and who went further West to set up in business for himself. And from accounts, the young couple were doing well in their new home. But the great event of Mrs. Flitters' matri-

monial schemes, was the marriage of her second daughter, Lousia Jane, to J. J. Jenkins, Esq., a Western speculator, and a man worth millions in prospective.

Building cities was Jenkins' specialty. At leisure moments, just in the lull of the rush of business he was always in, he would pay a little attention to corner lots, pick a few (out of his portmanteau) nicely marked on highly colored plats, and sell them to you "for merely nominal prices;" but his regular business was to build a city out of hand. He had stepped off the train at P——, on his way to Lake Superior, where one of his largest cities was going up, just to get a tooth filled, and "thought he would look round a little to see if he could not make a couple of hundred thousand dollars or so, now that he was here." While looking round he got acquainted with the Flitters, and indeed with almost all the people of means in the town.

He was the sensation of P——. When he stood on the steps of the post-office, with the lappels of his coat thrown back, displaying in full, his white vest and broad chest, he was sure to have a group of admirers around him, and how contemptible seemed the small safe business some of them were engaged in, compared with those great undertakings which Jenkins spoke of so carelessly. His dash, display, and great expectations had a bewildering effect on Flitters, without exactly impressing him with any great amount of confidence.

He supposed it was all right in the regular way

of business, that Jenkins should roll out new cities, as he, Flitters, rolled out sugar and molasses barrels; but as the matter was out of the family grocery and provision line, he did not pretend to know how it was done.

Mrs. Flitters was completely fascinated with the dash and style of Jenkins; she had given up the idea of finding the disguised English nobleman out West, but Jenkins actually surpassed her ideal, and he was "cap in hand" with all the English nobility, having paid flying visits to England, and talked of having Lord Tom and Sir Harry out to spend a month, fishing with him on Lake Superior, in a manner that showed on what intimate terms he stood with those distinguished men. And he had really promised Lady Blanche—Lord Tom's sister—"that should he get married one of these days, he would bring his wife over to England, on a visit to Lady Blanche."

Now it must not be supposed that Jenkins was a common lying cheat; he had been in England, had met with live lords, had made them believe in him and in his great schemes, because he believed in them himself.

About the time I am writing of, Western speculation was at fever heat. The rapid growth of Chicago, on Lake Michigan, had set people crazy. Wherever there was a sheet of water, or a stream that could turn a mill wheel, all that was necessary to commence the building of a city there, was as much money as would pay for the survey and maps

of the town site; those maps plentifully furnished with black lines, representing railroads in prospective—everything was in prospective—had only to be shown, when numbers rushed forward, either to take shares in the new company that had secured the site, or to buy lots at ridiculously high prices.

Was the history of this speculative mania written, some of its incidents would surpass the wildest romance, and afford materials for tragedy, comedy, and farce. While there was an innumerable number of knaves that committed the most barefaced swindles, there were others who entered upon the wildest speculations, fully as duped by their own heated imagination as the dupes they brought in after them.

Jenkins belonged more to the latter than the former class; he had already sunk some thousands—all he was worth—in one of the new—prospective—cities on Lake Superior, and his real business in Michigan was to settle some of the shares of the company.

He was a man about thirty-five years of age, with an open countenance, clear voice, ringing laugh, and a singular adaptability of manner and perception of character. Had he been born an English nobleman, he might have been one of Her Majesty's ministers, or a fashionable blackleg; being an American, he came West, and expanded into a Western speculator, a character that frequently combines and harmonizes traits that are found distinct in the two former characters.

Being introduced to the Flitters, Jenkins, as he said himself, "realized the situation at once." Mrs. Flitters, vulgar, ambitious, vain and foolish. Two marriageable daughters, some dash about the eldest, more in his style than Polly. Flitters no doubt, under the pressure of Mrs. Flitters, would come down handsomely, and he was the stamp of a safe kind of a father-in-law to fall back upon; one, too, that you could leave a wife with for an indefinite time, while you were attending to business. Accordingly, the friend of Lord Tom, Sir Harry, and Lady Blanche, and owner of countless wealth in prospective, proposed, and was accepted by Louisa Jane, to the triumphant joy of Mrs. Flitters, Flitters making no objection. He had with the most vacant stare, looked over several maps that Jenkins had set before him, and spent the rest of the evening violently polishing the bald spot. When the morning of the wedding arrived, Flitters presented his son-in-law with a check for two thousand dollars, which the latter stuck carelessly in his vest pocket, merely remarking, "Thank you, father-in-law; it will help to buy the cigars."

Flitters retreated, rubbing, if possible, more violently than ever, the polished crown.

"I don't exactly understand it," he said; "but I suppose Mrs. Flitters does, and I have followed her directions. We had quite a settlement drawn up, binding Simpson (Anna Maria's husband,) and I don't believe there is a steadier young man in the county. To be sure, he never thought of building

a city, and that's where the difference is, Mrs. Flitters says."

After a short bridal tour to Niagara and back, Mr. Jenkins left his wife at her father's, and went to see after the new city he was building on the shores of Lake Superior. He returned with five thousand dollars, his share of the sum realized by the company by the sale of a few outstanding lots. He reported the most fabulous prices offered and refused for lots in the business parts of the new city. The speculative fever increased; new companies started all over the country; and heretofore staid, sensible men gave their money to build large hotels in places where there was not a human being residing within many miles, or a road chopped out. Almost the only one in P—— who was not susceptible to the excitement, or in any way affected by it, was Flitters. "It was out of his line," he said. Even Robert McGregor was seized with a desire to speculate, just a little. The contrast between himself and the bustling, active, energetic Jenkins, whom he frequently met, began to appear to him as in favor of the latter. Without in the least becoming tired of his quiet life, with its love and peace and simple joys, the example of the restless energy of Jenkins affected him now just as Jim Allen's restless spirit used to rouse him out of his day-dreams when both were boys.

However, there were difficulties in the way of his speculating. He had firmly resolved that his cash capital in bank, and which was drawing six

per cent. interest, should never be interfered with. This he had set apart for his wife and children, and not the most tempting allurements could alter his mind; but in a conversation with Mr. Jenkins, the latter showed him a way out of his difficulty. I must do Jenkins the justice to say that he had used no direct influence to induce Robert McGregor to enter into any of his (Jenkins') speculations.

"If you have your mind made up, McGregor,"—Jenkins called every man by his name, without any prefix to it, half an hour after he got to know him—"If you have your mind made up about keeping your funds in bank, why, it's all right; but before I would have money, only drawing six per cent., I would play pitch with it; however, as I have said, that's your business; but you have real estate, have you not?"

"Yes," replied Robert, "several lots, and some land close to the town."

"Well, sell some of your property in this humdrum little town, and invest the money in a city that, not yet two years old, is destined to have its hundred thousand inhabitants before ten years, and its round half million in twenty years."

Accordingly, Robert sold some property, a small amount at first, and invested it in the new city. Within a month he was offered three times the amount he paid for the property he purchased. Like others, he grew excited, he sold out—with the exception of the cottage and the ground it was built on—all his property in and around P——, and in-

vested every dollar of the money realized, in Jenkins' city.

"I suppose fate has decreed that we are to be rich folks, after all, Lucie," he said.

"Or poor, Robert!"

"Why, you little croaker. But really, Lucie, I have only risked what was bringing us little or nothing. I have not risked my greatest treasure, my little wife," and he playfully caught her in his arms.

"Mr. Jenkins would tell you I was not negotiable paper, Robert," replied Lucie, disengaging herself from her husband's arms, and blushing at that praise which is ever sweet to a true wife.

This was in 1856, and in the following year came the financial crash of fifty-seven, so widespread in the West that it had the appearance of a national bankruptcy. Banks and bubbles broke alike; embryo cities and towns went back to their normal state—portions of the primeval forests, and bears and wolves lodged unmolested in "Lafayette Avenues" and "Washington Squares."

Jenkins' great city, on Lake Superior, met the common fate; residents who the year before used actually to keep out of the way of speculators that every steamboat that arrived landed on the wharf, in quest of corner lots, now offered their properties to captains of steamboats for a passage to Detroit, Buffalo, or Chicago.

One of this class said to the writer, in fifty-seven, on board the ill-fated Lady Elgin, from whose good

natured Captain the late wealthy—in prospective—citizen of Jenkins' great city, was getting a free passage:

"They, the speculators, were shaking the bags of gold at us, until we got frightened, and ran away."

He was running away in 1857, not from gold, but from the ruin, the stagnation, the utter poverty that had fallen upon the place.

In this collapse of the bright bubbles of speculation, Robert McGregor was ruined; in his case, indeed, it appeared that irretrievable ruin had overtaken him. In the case of such a man as Jenkins, it was but a knock down and a jump up again, but with the other, it was the first and the final blow.

The first news that came to Robert, was the failure of the bank in which his money was deposited. It seemed that owners heretofore esteemed as safe, honorable men, had speculated with their own capital, and the funds entrusted to their keeping, in the most reckless manner, and their liabilities far exceeded their assets. It was fortunate, perhaps, for Robert that he did not immediately recognize the full extent of his losses. Some little time elapsed before he gave up all hope of recovering some portion of his capital lodged in the bank. Then he wrote to Jenkins, who, with his wife, had gone to New York, telling him that he wished to sell out at any sacrifice, the real estate he had purchased in the new city, on Lake Superior. He received a characteristic reply from that gentleman.

"It is all up, McGregor," he wrote. "I don't be-

lieve you could get a man who would take the property off your hands on condition to pay the taxes. It is devilish unlucky; the cleanest sweep I ever knew; but we'll pull through and come out yet right side up. *Entre nous*, was not that stupid little father-in-law of mine wise in his generation. Fortunate, wasn't it; he can now help me a little to get on my legs, for I feel slightly groggy. Nasty weather here, all slush and rain.

"Yours to command,

"J. J. JENKINS."

On the receipt of this letter Robert set off to Lake Superior. It was getting late in the fall when he reached Jenkins' City, and most of the deluded inhabitants had made their escape. The new stores erected in the one straggling street were shut up. With the help of a guide, Robert found out his property on Franklin street, thickly settled with black stumps.

As Robert was well dressed and looking after property, the few poor inhabitants that remained in the place, because they had no means of leaving, supposed him to be one of the company who had seduced them into the wilderness, and scowled at him as he passed along.

Jenkins' letter, plain as it was, had not prepared him for the blank failure that he looked upon, and with a heavy heart he went on board the steamboat by which he came, to return. There were but few passengers on board; the weather was what

sailors term dirty, and sitting apart in the saloon, Robert had plenty of time to think over his altered fortunes.

It is wonderful how quickly we can adapt ourselves to novel and startling situations. Had Robert McGregor a few weeks ago asked himself as an abstract question: "What would I do should all my means be suddenly swept away?" very likely his mind would suggest some such answer as, "I would go crazy, it would kill me." But there is a grand elasticity in the human heart, ere grief and sorrow have weakened its life pulse, and when Robert's meditations were broken in upon by the sound of the supper gong, he went to table with a good appetite, and with a cheerfulness surprising to himself, and joined in general conversation with the captain and passengers. As he sandwiched himself that night into one of the berths of the little box called a state room, he thought: "Well, I know the worst now, and must meet it like a man, God helping me; I shall work for Lucie and the children," and with this brave resolve he fell asleep.

I can imagine nothing more exhilarating than the change from the stifling little stateroom to the deck of a Lake Superior boat, on a fine, clear morning. No thought of a long, uncertain voyage disturbs the mind. No monotony of a boundless expanse of water; no depressing thoughts of landing among strangers in a strange land; but the clearest and brightest of American waters under your keel, the American flag over your head, Amer-

ica's broad expanse of shore and forest in view, and at every dent and nook, called a harbor, that the boat enters, the stars and stripes to greet you.

Such a morning and such a scene greeted Robert, when he went on deck the second day. The weather had cleared up during the night; the air was bracing, without being at all chilly, the lake calm, and the blue sky without a cloud.

The boat had passed La Pointe, and the Apostle Islands were no longer in sight; but as Robert looked astern, he saw them rising, as it were, from the depth of the lake, and floating high up in space, while gigantic trees flung their shadows deep down into the clear waters beneath.

"That is one of our Lake Superior mirages," said the captain, as he noticed his passenger gazing at the phenomenon; "it is a sign of good weather."

"And I, too," thought Robert, his spirits reviving under the combined influences of pure air, quick motion, and grand scenery, "I, too, accept it as a good omen."

From the troubled waters of affliction, God's love draws us up nearer to himself.

Having disembarked at Detroit, he arrived in P—— on the evening of the eighth day since he left. He had never been so long absent from his family since his marriage, and with hurried steps he passed through the streets on his way to his home.

When he came within sight of his cottage, two curly-headed little fellows rushed out of the garden, clapping their hands, and calling out at the top of

their voices: "Papa! Papa!" while Lucie stood at the door of the cottage with baby in her arms.

Robert's heart gave a great leap; catching up the children, he hurried forward, and in one loving embrace encircled his wife and child.

Once again at home, with the excitement of the journey, the anticipation of return over, Robert's spirits underwent one of those sudden revulsions peculiar to nervous temperaments.

As he looked at his wife and children, the thought of his great loss and of the uncertain future, pressed down upon him with such intense force, that he felt as if it would have been a relief to cry out.

Lucie had noticed the change. Her love had detected every shadow as it came to her husband's spirit; but she had resolved if possible to keep him from speaking of business, this, the first evening of his return home. So she bustled about, and laughed and talked with such seeming light-heartedness, that Robert looked at her with amazement. But when the children were put to bed, Lucie entered the study where her husband was, and sitting down beside him, she drew him toward her until her head rested on his bosom.

"I thought, Robert," she said, "not to allow you to speak about business this evening; but I find I cannot keep it from your thoughts; so tell me all, love; can there be anything worse than that which we know already? Speak, love, my heart is listening to you."

"Nothing worse, darling," he answered, "but everything is confirmed."

"Very well," she said, "all the better not to be left in suspense. And now, what is the worst, dear? That we are poor, Robert? my normal state," she continued, playfully patting his cheek. "I shall be quite at home in it; I shall feel as I do when I lay aside a fine dress, and, putting on an every-day one, have a romp with the children. Poverty never caused me a sigh when I had to meet it alone. Now I have you to lean on, and you, dear, have me, and we both have the children to love and labor for. Oh, God! forgive me for saying that we are poor; we are rich, Robert, very rich, and we will be very, very happy!"

And there rained down upon his face, not tears—no, not one tear—but a shower of warm kisses.

Her brave words, her tender, active love, restored to her husband's mind its healthy tone. "He would set about doing something at once."

What that something was, was the difficult question that husband and wife did not discuss for the present.

The next evening Mr. Flitters and his daughter, Polly, called. Lucie was very fond of pretty Polly, and the latter had spent almost all her time at the cottage while Robert was away. Since the marriage of her sisters, her father seemed to understand and appreciate her much better than before, for her individuality was no longer hidden by their dashing, fashionable airs. When her sisters left,

Polly got nearer to her father, to the great satisfaction of both. So they often now took walks together, always with a sense of relief and pleasure, when they found themselves beyond the ken of that able woman, Mrs. Flitters.

Robert had a sincere friendship and respect for the little man, although he often laughed heartily at the way he had of dodging Mrs. Flitters' magnificence, to prevent his being altogether crushed by it. They were, in fact, intimate friends, and though so essentially different in almost every respect, enjoyed each other's society very much. On this evening Flitters seemed unusually restrained and bothered. At length, after polishing his head, until the excitement brought moisture to his face, he looked at Polly, and then at Lucie. The former seemed at once to understand the look, for she arose, and asking Lucie to accompany her for a moment, the two ladies left the room—the sigh of relief which accompanied their departure, assuring Polly that she had understood her father. When the door closed upon them, Flitters drew his chair close to Robert.

"You went up to that new city?" he said.

"City?" replied Robert, bitterly. "Yes, a city with a few tumble-down shanties, black stumps, and a few houses built by speculators, for bait to catch gudgeons."

"Then you cannot get anything out of it?"

"No, I was glad enough to get myself out of it."

"And the bank?"

"Every cent gone, my friend; you must look not to give me credit at the store."

"What are you going to do?"

Robert twitched, and a frown came to his face.

"You must not be vexed," said the little man, "if a friend asks you what half the town is asking behind your back."

"No, no, Mr. Flitters, I am not vexed," said Robert, "I know you mean kindly, but all this is so new to me. And now to answer your question, I don't well know what I shall do."

"You have no knowledge of the family grocery and provision business," said the other, in a kind of musing tone.

Robert smiled. "No, no," he said, "although some fellows in my place might have an idea of doing something with rope."

Robert had not perpetrated his poor joke with the slightest idea that it would be understood by Flitters.

"Well, well," said the latter, appearing and disappearing behind his hand rapidly, "it is out of my line to advise you, but until you settle your business you may be short of cash, and I just took the liberty of filling up this check," and he drew a fat pocketbook from his pocket, and commenced to open it.

"Stop, Mr. Flitters," said Robert, catching his hand, and giving it a warm shake. "I am not in want of money as yet, thank you all the same; and I promise, if I ever ask a man for the loan of

money, it will be you. See, I can give you a cigar yet, and here is a lighted match—now draw."

Flitters obeyed the order, and as he smoked, his eyes revolved from the brick house, seen dimly through the twilight, to Robert's face.

At length a revelation seemed to dawn upon him. He jerked his thumb over his shoulder, as stooping over, he said in a low voice to Robert: "Maybe you think that she would know something about it?"

"Oh no, Mr. Flitters," answered Robert, smiling, "I am not, indeed, in present want of money; and if I was, I could not take it, even from you, until I knew how it was to be repaid. Here comes Miss Polly, that took such good care of my wife while I was away," and Robert, meeting the young girl as she entered the room with Lucie, took her soft, fair hand, and gallantly raised it to his lips. Polly's heart just gave a little flutter, although for years he had been another's.

Robert accompanied his visitor down to the garden gate that night, and as he took the honest hand of Flitters in his own, he said: "Don't think I am ungrateful to you, or too proud either, but it is just as I told you."

After they had passed away, Robert remained leaning over the low gate. "So," he mused, as a hot blush came to his face, "half the town is asking what I am going to do."

His spirit yet unbroken, resented this interference in his affairs. He was learning his first lesson;

he knew that he was poor. He had yet to learn all that that means.

Robert McGregor was to set about doing something at once; so he had told Lucie, and so he had resolved.

He had borne up against the reverses that came so suddenly on him, that had left him—who heretofore never for one hour knew the want of money—penniless.

With means amply sufficient for his wants, without any unhealthy craving for riches, monetary matters heretofore had the least place in his thoughts. It was more from a feeling that he should not be altogether idle and indifferent, in the midst of so much activity and enterprise, rather than the desire for wealth, which had led him to embark in Jenkins' speculations. It was his early resolve always to keep secure a sufficiency which would make him independent of the world, and allow him to carry out his own idea of happiness, that caused him to leave his ready money in a bank, rather than invest it in any business that might have a shadow of risk about it. But now, all his plans, anticipations, fancied security, were swept away, and he was rudely awakened from his tranquil dream of happiness, to be thrust forth to battle in a situation new to him, with a world yesterday all smiles, but now black and threatening.

He had resolved to do something; in the full strength of his manhood, with intellect and education, what was to prevent him?

There was one thing, and a very serious difficulty it was—he had never done anything, and a whole year elapsed, in which the question of what he should do was almost daily discussed by himself and his wife, without any practical results.

At first these little family councils were full of hope. Lucie, who, when but a very little girl, had commenced to support herself by her own exertions, would not have been a bad counsellor, but that love made her overrate Robert's qualifications. She had the most exaggerated idea of his fitness for anything he would undertake, and was positive that every description of person, from the President down, would be eager to avail themselves of his services.

Indeed, she suggested to Robert, that he should see the President, and tell him "just how matters were."

Oh, the building of those castles in the air! how lofty they were at first, then more modest, sometimes fading away, then reappearing—the plan devised, settled upon in the evening, becoming impracticable the next morning.

And with these changing views came a corresponding change of spirit, more perceptible in Robert than in his brave little wife, who, for his sake, would not allow the world to rob him of her smiles. And many a time when, with a heavy, foreboding heart, she went about her household duties, her song and merry laugh would reach her husband's ears, and he would mentally say: "Thank God,

poor Lucie does, not fully realize the terrible position we are in."

In this, Robert McGregor made a mistake very common to the male portion of the human race, who, being of a coarser nature than woman, seldom understand or value their subtle heroism.

When misfortunes besiege us, man shows a bold front on the battlements, to the enemy! But to woman is given the more delicate and difficult task of keeping up hope and faith within the garrison itself.

Thus a whole year passed by without anything being actually effected toward Robert's procuring suitable employment.

Outside his professional calls, Doctor McGregor had never mixed much in the society of P—, and his son had still fewer intimate acquaintances. Indeed, when the latter thought over the matter, he found that Flitters was the only one in the town that he regarded in the light of a friend, and of all others, Flitters was the least able to advise or suggest anything outside of what he called, "his line of business."

Flitters, as we have seen, offered to lend him money, but Robert had wisely resolved not to add to his troubles and humiliations by borrowing, and in every other way Flitters was totally unable to serve him. But now Robert McGregor's resources were exhausted; the shadow of poverty was darkening his threshold; he could no longer debate at his own fireside the question, what shall I do? He

must go forth and ask of the world, what will you give me to do? And he did, seeking employment first outside of P—, but his not being familiar with any particular branch of business was a disadvantage he found it impossible to overcome. In dealing with strangers, he found it a most humiliating disadvantage, for people were not inclined to look very favorably upon a man who had arrived at his time of life without any business employment. Weary and dispirited, he returned to P—. Here at least he was known, and would not have to answer a long list of questions; so he went among his acquaintances. Some expressed regret at his altered circumstances; others undertook to show how it was all his own fault; and others patronizingly pitied him. He was growing old in humiliation. Already he had traveled such a distance from his old life, that it appeared visionary, unreal, when seen from the grey, sunless reality of the present.

At length he was offered, and accepted the place of teacher in the public school of P—, at a salary of fifty dollars a month, and as the school was open for nine months in the year, his salary kept him from what is called actual want; that is, he was not compelled either to commit highway robbery or go to the workhouse. He had still his cottage, and he clung to it as to a last friend.

Indeed, property had depreciated so much in P— for some years, following the year fifty-seven, that, was he willing to sell his home, he would have

found it difficult to procure a purchaser. He had another advantage, greater than the home that sheltered him—he did not get in debt. He had been suddenly flung from independence, from refined contentment, to struggle with poverty. He had become familiar with its poor make-shifts, its ceaseless problem of how to make something very narrow cover something very wide, its vulgar familiarity, its actual wants; but he had escaped the demon that springs from the jaws of poverty, and crushes out the spirit, the manhood, the very soul of its victim; he was not in debt.

Whether it was his pride or his strict principles, whatever the motive that actuated him, it was to him, in this respect, a guardian angel, preserving him from the most poisoned arrow poverty has in its quiver. Thus toiling for those he loved, it could not be said that he was unhappy. No man of his nature and principles, with a home like his to return to, could be actually unhappy.

The sparkle, the light joy of life had passed away; but its sweet love, purified, made patient and strong by trials, and unshaken faith in the providence of a heavenly Father, these still remained.

Robert McGregor had entered upon the third year of his teacher's life. The long summer vacation had just commenced, and after a warm day, Lucie and her husband, sitting in the cottage porch, while their children played around, were enjoying the cool of the evening, so delicious and soothing, after a hot parching sun.

Of the two, Robert was far more changed in appearance. He had a careworn look very perceptible in his face, when it was in repose, his old elasticity of step was changed into a sober, and at times, a weary gait; and the pleasant lighting up of eye and features—that in other days, the simplest passing emotion would bring forth—seldom came now without an effort. But Lucie was still bright and beautiful. Her early training had made her cheerfully accept work when it came; constant employment kept her healthy in mind and body, and could she but feel that her husband was happy, she would be so in her present humble, busy life.

She had fretted most, immediately after her husband's losses, because everything was vague and unsettled. But now they had settled down to decent poverty, and as she told Robert once, "she was quite at home in it." A woman whose love is great enough to fill her whole being, can never be unhappy, so long as the object of her love is left to her. Besides, poverty is always more evident in a man's dress than in a woman's; I speak now of honest, independent poverty, that wears its own clothes.

In cases of this kind you can almost trace its stages by the nap of a man's hat; Robert's was becoming brown, next season it would be foxy red; his best coat was worn at the seams, with an unhealthy gloss on its sleeves.

We pay our teachers about half the wages of mechanics, and expect them to dress in broad-

cloth and fine linen, and they, from necessity, compromise the matter by appearing in seedy gentility.

But Lucy, in her neat, well-fitting, calico dress, that she made, washed, and ironed herself, might have walked by the side of a duke, and his titles would have been outranked by her grace and beauty.

On this evening she looked unusually well, for an event had occurred during the day which brought a pleasant excitement to the inmates of Inverness Cottage, and Lucie, her cheeks rosy from the unusual exercise of milking a cow—that had a very prominent part in the excitement referred to—was now for the second or third time discussing it in all its details with her husband.

In the morning, a man driving a wagon, in which sat a respectable-looking, middle-aged woman, drove up to the gate of the cottage.

A fine cow, tied by a rope to the hinder part of the wagon, followed after.

Pulling up, the man got down and helped his companion to alight. Robert, who was sitting at the window, concluded that they were people in from the country who had some farm produce to sell, and when they advanced up the garden walk, he went to the door to meet them.

Both had pleasant faces, and as they drew near they smiled, as if they knew the gentleman who waited for them, although he could not remember having seen either of them before.

The man was the first to speak.

"I believe you are Mr. McGregor, sir?" he said.

"Indeed, an' he is," said the woman, coming in front. "I know him, though I havn't set eyes on him since he was a little boy. He is Robert McGregor, and that's the sweetest name that ever sounded in my ears. How are you, Mr. McGregor, and how is all the family?" and she gave Robert's hand a hearty shake.

There was such thorough good nature in her address, that he could not think of asking her who she was, so he returned her greeting, and asked her in.

"Myself and my husband, sir, Tom Mahon, sir—" here Tom stretched out his big hand, and gave Robert a mighty grip—"have come on a little business, to you," she said.

So, thought Robert, as a change came to his manner, there is some reason for this assumed good nature.

"Come in here," he said, leading the way to the study, "and you can tell me what you want."

They had hardly entered the room, when Mrs. Mahon, who, woman-like, had cast her eyes all round, caught sight of Doctor McGregor's portrait, suspended from the wall. With an exclamation she hurried forward, and standing before it, gave way to an impassioned burst of grief, characteristic of her race.

"Come here, Tom," she sobbed, as the tears rolled down her face. "There is our friend, Tom, the friend of the poor; that's his picture; but he is in a better place himself, as high in heaven as the best

of them, for sure, there is no one nearer to God's heart, than them who love his poor."

Her husband stood looking respectfully at the portrait for a little while, then he said:

"Hush, Mary, you're making too free, and may be annoying the gentleman, who cannot understand you. Quiet yourself, Mary, and tell him all about it."

Robert, indeed, was greatly moved at so unexpected a scene, the sincerity of which there was no room to doubt, and at the simple words of praise bestowed on his father, his eyes filled with tears.

"You knew my father, then?" he said

"Yes, sir," answered Mrs. Mahon, growing somewhat calm, and taking a chair which Robert offered her; "I had a good right to know him, he was the best friend I ever had. Indeed, I could not help myself, when I saw his likeness there; you must forgive me for making so free like."

"I have nothing to forgive, Mrs. Mahon," he answered, "and I am glad to meet one who speaks so feelingly of my beloved father."

Here Lucie entered the room, followed by the children.

"This is my wife, Mrs. Mahon," continued Robert.

Mrs. Mahon rose. "How are you, ma'am," she said, respectfully.

Lucie saluted both her visitors.

"And look at the beautiful children, Tom," said Mrs. Mahon, addressing her husband. "Give me what I gave you to keep." Tom Mahon dived his

hand into his pocket, wrestled for a moment with something in its lowest depths, and then drew forth a paper parcel, and handed it to his wife.

"A little candy, ma'am," continued the latter, "for the children; sure, I knew I'd find them here. There, dears, divide it. Tom, look after the horses."

Tom, who, just as anxious as his wife to pay this visit, had nevertheless made no calculation for a scene, seemed very glad to escape out of the room, and when he was gone, Mrs. Mahon, again resuming her seat, commenced an explanation of her visit.

"I don't know, Mr. McGregor," she said, "that you ever heard of us, but we lived near here in the Beaver Dam settlement, over fifteen years ago, and I often saw you with your father, when you were a little boy. We were very poor, Tom had no money to hire help to clear the land, and not being long from the old country, he was no great hand at the ax himself. So our clearing was only small, and the best support we had for the children was our one cow, and the cow died, ma'am—turning to Lucie—oh, would you believe it, ma'am, I gave up entirely, God forgive me, and got sick *on the head of the cow*. Well, my husband went for Doctor McGregor; your father, sir, for the poorer you were, sir, the quicker the doctor would come to you. He came, and good luck, happiness, and comfort came in along with him, and remained with us ever since. He came when there was such a heavy cloud resting on my heart, that it could not see God, and he

raised it off with his good words and kind voice. When he told me that we should never forget that there was one above, who could make the darkest night bright as day, I remembered that I had learned the same lesson, though said differently, from my own mother, at home; but the hardships in the woods of America had driven it out of my mind, until your father's words brought it back. The next morning, ma'am, (turning again to Lucie,) one of Doctor McGregor's best cows was standing at my door; and from that day to this good luck has followed us. I don't know, sir, if you ever heard anything of what I am telling you?"

"I remember something about it, I think," answered Robert, "because a man named Weasel, who was mayor here afterwards, undertook to lecture my father in reference to this very incident, and received such a well-merited rebuke, that he was an enemy of my father from that time."

"Well, sir," continued Mrs. Mahon, "as I was telling you, good luck came along with the doctor into our house. To be sure, the fine cow was a great help; but it wasn't so much that, sir, as the new courage that came to Tom's heart and my own. Oh, courage is everything, ma'am. Tom made a fine clearing that year, and when he had all the brush burned off, and was ready to put in the corn, do you know what he says to me, ma'am? 'I wish, Mary, Doctor McGregor would come along, until I'd show him this field.' Do you think, sir,

but the same thought was in my own mind. I don't know how it was; that is, I can't explain it; but it seemed from this out, as if we worked to please the doctor, like, to show him that we were not undeserving of his goodness; to make his words, his promise of better times, come true. Well, five years after this we sold our farm here for a good price, and moved to a new one, near Grand Rapids, about thirty-five miles from this. We sold everything we had on the old place, but your father's present; we brought her with us, and she died with us. In this very room my husband and myself bid your father good-by, Mr. McGregor, and when we told him, Mrs. McGregor, ma'am, that we were bringing our good luck along with us, meaning the cow, you should see how he rubbed his hands together, and the pleasant smile that came to his face."

Robert McGregor shaded his eyes with his hand. With what vivid distinctness he remembered that familiar action of his father—when greatly pleased—that Mrs. Mahon had spoken of.

"I'm tiring you," continued the latter, "with my long story; but I'll soon be done. We have as fine a farm now, Mr. McGregor, as you could find from here to there, and sixteen cows come into our yard to be milked. The children are good, and healthy, and able to help us now, and not a sorrow worth talking of did we know for many a day, until we heard, a little while ago, of the misfortunes that had overtaken you, sir; how you were robbed of the honest fortune your father left to you, by a lot of vil-

lains. The ways of the Lord are wonderful, blessed be his holy name. Sure, if ever money was to have luck, your father's should. That's what we think; but God is the wisest. Oh, that was a dark day to my husband and myself when we heard of your great loss. 'Tom,' says I, 'we must go and see them. Patrick and Kittie are old enough to take care of the place while we are away.' 'Very well, Mary,' says he; 'I would walk on my knees to see them, if I thought it would do them any good.' 'It will do them good,' says I, 'it will do us good. In his own house, that sorrow has darkened, I will tell the son the same words his father told me in my poor cabin, and Tom, ashore, they will sound like a message from that good father to the child he loved so well.'

Mrs. Mahon paused, for her voice had become broken, and her face flushed and tearful.

Silently Lucie moved over to her husband's side, and took his hands in both her own. On the hands thus clasped, the tears of husband and wife rained down warmly and gently.

After a little, their visitor again spoke.

"It was Tom himself that thought of taking the liberty of bringing the cow that's outside, as a present to you, Mrs. McGregor—to be sure, we owe it; but it's not that at all, oh, no, indeed, Mrs. McGregor, we would never think of it at all, only she's granddaughter to the one we got from the doctor; that's it, you see, sir. 'Maybe, Mary,' says Tom, the very morning he was tying

the cow behind the wagon, 'maybe Mr. McGregor would be vexed at our taking such a liberty.' 'Whist,' says I, 'he might, if we were rich folks, showing off like; but his father's son is not likely to misunderstand us.' And wasn't I right, Mr. McGregor? And sure you will not be too proud to allow Mrs. McGregor to take this little present from me? If I made myself understood at all, you know that the favor will be all on your side."

"No, indeed, Mrs. Mahon," answered Robert, "you must not think anything of the kind; we will take your present, a most valuable one at the present time, for we are very poor. I thank you a thousand times for your visit," he continued, as he shook her hand warmly; "you have cheered me, and strengthened my trust in God, and my faith in human nature."

Tom Mahon now entered the room, and Robert, going up to him, took his honest hand, while Mrs. Mahon, nodding vigorously, said:

"It's all right, Tom."

"And now, Lucie," said Robert, "get our friends something to eat, while I show Mr. Mahon where to put up his horses. You will remain with us to-day, Mrs. Mahon."

"No, Mr. McGregor, we can't," she answered; "we only left young people in the house, and we must get home to-day."

"Well, we will argue that point by-and-by," said Robert, as he and Mahon left the room.

By the time the horses and cow were in the barn,

the former supplied with the feed that Mahon had carried from home with him, and the children rescued for the sixth or seventh time from imminent danger, incurred by the wild manner they rushed around the horses, Lucie had a plain dinner—the best she could furnish—ready; and all sat down with a good appetite, and enjoyed it thoroughly. But Lucie or Robert could not prevail upon their visitors to remain the day.

"They were too anxious about the houseful of children they left behind them," Mrs. Mahon said.

As she stood waiting for her husband to bring the wagon round, she turned to Robert, and said.

"Mr. McGregor, mark my words. God has tried you sorely, but he has not deserted you. Good days are in store for you yet. A child of Doctor McGregor's cannot fail but to have good fortune even in this world, in the long run; now mark my words, and promise that you'll come to tell the old woman of the good fortune, when it comes."

"I promise, Mrs. Mahon," answered Robert, with a cheerful smile. And then he thought of the words of the Psalmist, "I have been young, and am now old; and I have not seen the just forsaken, nor his seed seeking bread."

And this faith, this beautiful trust in the special interposition of God in regard to each and all of his creatures, as clear to the uneducated mind of Mrs. Mahon as to the inspired David, the Agassiz, the Darwins, and material philosophers of the present day—each in his own way—would rob men

of. What do they offer in return? What do they offer for that faith in Divine revelation, which is a pillar of light to guide us, a pillar of strength to support us in the sorrows, trials and vicissitudes of life? What do they offer in exchange? Nothing.

In the human heart they rob of its faith, they leave a dull, aching want they cannot satisfy or stifle. Better paganism than this. Better to sacrifice to the "unknown God," than to lose God altogether, through the mystifying evolutions of modern philosophy.

But Mr. Mahon is sitting in his wagon, waiting at the gate for his wife. She kisses the children, gives Lucie a kiss on each cheek, and then, taking Robert's hands in hers, she says: "God be with you, Mr. McGregor."

The whole family accompany her to the gate, when the kissing and hand-shaking are repeated. Lucie lifts up little Mary for Tom Mahon to kiss, then he shakes hands with Mrs. McGregor tenderly, but gives Robert a mighty squeeze. The wagon moves off, and Mrs. Mahon, with her head turned round, calls out cheerily:

"Remember your promise, Mr. McGregor!"

Then, as the wagon turns out of view, the cheerful expression of the face gives place to one of gentle sadness, as she says sorrowfully:

"Oh! my poor, poor gentleman!"

The rest of the day was one of great excitement at Inverness Cottage. Innumerable excursions were made to the barn by the children, and at least four

state visits were paid, by the entire family, to Mrs. Mahon's cow.

Doctor McGregor was right when he said to Solomon Weasel, "Cast your bread upon the waters."

The visit of the Mahons acted as a healthy tonic on Robert McGregor's jaded spirit. He went off in quest of hay for the cow, and when he returned with it, the excitement became intense. I doubt if any farm-yard in the country could show such lively industry as was displayed in and around the barn, for an hour or more.

It was a miracle that the two boys, Robert and James, did not break their necks from the reckless manner they swung themselves up into the loft.

Then Robert, with his coat off, tossed them up the hay, half of each forkful invariably coming back upon his head and shoulders, at which little Mary, standing by her mother's side, would clap her hands and laugh; and Robert, shaking himself free of the hay, would look back at both and laugh, while the royal rooster, with slow, majestic steps, and followed by his whole feathered harem, perambulated round the yard, and in clarion tones, protested against this invasion of vested rights.

Oh! blessings on you, bright jets of sunshine that come into the poor man's life. I doubt not but that you are healthier and better than the continued glare of the hot sun of prosperity, so apt to shrivel up the heart.

And now the excitement had subsided, the cow was milked, the barn door locked, and, as I said be-

fore, Lucie and her husband sat in the cottage porch, chatting over the incident of the friendly visit they had received that day, while their children played around.

"Robert," said Lucie, after a brief pause in the conversation, "I believe firmly in Mrs. Mahon's prophecy of brighter days."

"That is right, my little wife," he answered, "you have twice the faith and courage of your good-for-nothing husband."

Lucie twined one arm around Robert's neck, and placing her hand upon his mouth, said:

"Stop instantly, sir, I will not hear a disparaging word said against that dear husband I love so well. You believe yourself, sir, in our grateful, good-natured Cassandra; I see faith in your eyes."

"I believe, Lucie, in God's loving care, and this friendly visit has been a most happy, hope-inspiring one, doing us a wonderful deal of good."

"Wait now until I try and guess how our good luck is to come," said Lucie, playfully. Then, after a pause, she clapped her hands and cried out, "Oh! I have it. James Allen will return!"

Robert almost started from his chair; his face flushed, and involuntarily he cast an eager look around. At that moment his second oldest boy was running by him. He caught the child, and pressed him to his breast.

"Oh, Jim, Jim," he said, "pray to God to send your namesake, my friend, my brother, back to me."

PART VII.

The long months of vacation, during which there was no salary coming in, were a hard strain on Robert McGregor, and taxed Lucie's economical devices and housekeeping strategy to the utmost.

The year before, at this time, Robert sold his library, not getting one-fifth of its value, reserving only a few books, precious from being favorites of his father, and having notes in the latter's handwriting on their margins. Now they were compelled to sell different pieces of furniture, getting next to nothing in money for articles, the removal of which made the house look so unhomelike, bare and poverty-stricken; though Lucie strove, by refixing and devising with a woman's taste and ingenuity, to cover over those poverty gaps in their home.

It was a sad day at the cottage, when dire necessity first obliged its inmates to open their door to the second-hand furniture dealer. How carelessly he swaggered from room to room with his hat on; while the children, wondering, frightened and indignant, followed him.

How he shrugged his shoulders, grimaced, tossed about, and kicked with his big foot, articles highly valued by those accustomed to connect them with home associations.

Unbidden, he swaggered into the study, where Robert followed him with hasty steps.

"There is nothing here," said the latter, "that I wish to sell."

"Well," said the dealer, with a coarse laugh, "that's lucky enough, for I don't believe there is much in it that you could sell, unless it was the old gentleman's picture there."

Robert's face flushed with anger. "That is my father's likeness, sir," he said, in a stern voice.

"Oh, no offence," replied the man. "But you see, we sometimes get a good customer for one of those old portraits."

"I can't see," said Robert, "what value a family portrait could be, unless to the family it belonged."

"Can't you see," said the dealer, "how it may be of value to people in search of a family?"

"In search of a family?"

"Yes, in search of old family pegs, to hang their new gentility upon. My father was in this business in New York, and he used to say that he sold dozens of families their ancestors. I sold your neighbor, Mrs. Flitters, a family portrait last week. A fine old gentleman, with silver buckles, silk stockings, and his hair powdered and tied in a queue behind; he's gone to New York to be cleaned. I'd bet the drinks that he'll come back a near relative. Well, if you don't want to sell any more of this old trumpery, I'll pitch it into my wagon, and pay you."

It was a great relief to Robert when the dealer took his departure; and with shame and sadness, the former looked around upon the dismantled house. Lucie went up to him, and putting her arm

around him, said, "There was too much old-fashioned furniture in the house altogether, Robert. Wait until I tidy up things, and it will look just as well as ever."

"Yes, love," he answered, fondling her cheek. "The old fashions follow the old times. How is this to end? Month after month, week after week, day after day, we grow poorer and poorer. How is it to end?"

"As God wills, Robert," she answered.

"As God wills," he repeated. "Yes, as God wills. You are braver and stronger than I am, Lucie. I would be ashamed to tell you how weak and cowardly I feel to-day."

"You are not well," she said, as she remarked his color come and go, and felt how feverish his hand was. "You are ill, Robert, and never told me a word about it."

"Only a slight cold, Lucie. I had a dread of the remorseless way you would begin to doctor me, did I say anything about it."

But the next day Robert was so seriously ill as to be unable to leave his bed, and in three days after, the doctor, who was called in, pronounced his case one of low fever.

"More will depend," he said to Lucie—who followed him to the hall door, with anxious questions—"upon good nursing, than good doctoring."

Robert had said that she was braver and stronger than he. Pray God that it is so; pray God that she is brave and strong now; for the darkest trial,

one that she must bear alone, has come to her; as for weary weeks, with an admirably calm exterior, that overlooks not the smallest trifle of patient, loving care, she watches the flickering of that life, more precious to her than all else besides.

It was at this time when friendship was such a boon, that Polly Flitters and her father proved themselves to be true and active friends. At the very outset of Robert's sickness, Flitters called, and putting a sum of money into Lucie's hand, told her to draw on him for five times the amount, if necessary.

"You can do nothing," said the little man, polishing his head, and then blowing his nose vigorously, as he saw Lucie's tears silently coursing down her cheeks, "if you have money matters to bother you. Your husband would never let me accommodate him, and he has just fretted himself into this sickness. Here is Polly coming over; I must be off. Good-bye, and keep up your spirits."

And Polly came over, not to pay a visit; but to stay day and night with Lucie, during Robert's illness, (and, to do Mrs. Flitters justice, I must say that the young girl did this with her mother's full approbation.)

Polly attended to the house, and took care of the children, while Lucie remained in the sick room; or she took the latter's place when, worn out with watching, Lucie slept for a little while. How inexpressibly dear she became to Lucie, during those anxious days.

The doctor said that good nursing was what the patient required most, and love bestowed this lavishly.

Three weeks after Robert had been attacked with fever, the crisis came on; it was safely passed, and from this time he gradually recovered.

Oh, the delight of seeing him smile again; of propping him up with pillows in an arm chair, while Lucie put fresh white sheets on his bed, and then, laying him down, refreshed and cool, kissed his thin cheek—all the time prattling away in low, musical tones, tremulous with joy, of pleasant trifles.

It was fully six weeks before Robert was able to leave his room; he had been attacked with sickness just at the close of vacation, and it was now the middle of October. Of course, another teacher had taken his place in the school; he was deprived of the only means he had for the support of his family, and winter was coming on. Its outriders, the brown leaves, borne on the autumn winds, whirled by the window from which he sadly gazed.

Lucie had left him alone for a few moments, and now returned with some grapes on a plate.

"Mrs. Flitters has sent you these grapes, Robert," she said, "to coax your appetite."

"She is very kind," he said. "It seems to me that she has been supplying my appetite rather than coaxing it, since my recovery."

"And as for Polly and Mr. Flitters," said Lucie, with a grateful warmth, "never, never, can we repay them for all their goodness."

"You are right, love. Sit down, darling, near me; I want to speak with you. How did you manage to get along while I was sick?"

"Mr. Flitters, Robert, gave me all the money I wanted."

"So I thought, God bless him; but we must pay him, Lucie."

"Of course we shall. But do not, Robert, talk of business for a little while, until you have grown stronger."

"It will do me good, Lucie, to tell you of a plan I have in mind."

"What is it?"

"We must sell this place for whatever it will bring, pay Mr. Flitters, and seek a new home further West. What do you say, little wife?"

"Oh, it is just what I have been thinking of," said Lucie, "but feared to mention it, because I knew you loved your home so much."

"Too much to live in it a pauper, Lucie."

Now that Robert was convalescent, Mr. Flitters generally spent part of every evening with him, and to him Robert disclosed his plan of selling his home.

"There is no demand or price for real estate here at present, I know," said Robert. "So that I cannot expect to get much for it; but I suppose I can get something."

"The first thing you have to do, is to get well and strong," replied his friend; "then you can look out for a purchaser."

This was so sensible an advice, that Robert determined to follow it, and his mind being tranquilized by the thought of the new effort he was about to make, he gradually recovered health and strength.

But in the early part of November an event took place which brought about a sudden abandonment of all his late plans.

Calling at the post office one morning, he received the following letter:

OFFICE OF HENRY MARSH,
Attorney at Law,
21 Chambers St., New York, Nov. 7, 1860.

SIR:—I am directed by Mr. Geo. D. Livingstone, executor to the will of the late Wm. McGregor, to inform you of the death of your uncle, which took place in this city, last month. Furthermore, I am instructed to say that it was the desire of the testator, that all persons interested in his will should be present at its opening, and as you are one of the legatees mentioned, and the executor wishes that you should have ample time to make preparations to attend, has fixed the 20th of next December, in the forenoon—at my office—as the time for the opening and reading of the will.

Your ob't serv't,
HENRY F. MARSH.

With this letter open in his hand, Robert rushed home.

By the time Lucie had read it, he had recovered breath so far as to be able to explain to her that his uncle had been very rich, and, no doubt, left

him a large sum. Then Lucie, with her arms around his neck, exclaimed with joy:

"Oh! Robert, our fortune has come to us. But why did you never tell me about this rich uncle before?"

A sudden chill came to Robert at these words, and he answered, in a voice so changed, that Lucie looked up at him astonished.

"Because he had fallen out with my father and I, years ago, and the remembrance of the cause has always been painful to me."

"Well, you see, he forgave, Robert. I'm so happy, for your sake. I must go and tell Polly Flitters, and do you, Robert, go at once, and tell the good news to Mr. Flitters, they deserve this from us. May I take the letter? What will Mrs. Flitters say? We must ask them all to come over this evening."

"It can't be otherwise," thought Robert, when Lucie had left him; "the old man forgave me before his death for the foolish trick Jim and I played him. I wish I had been near him, to have asked his forgiveness."

A happy party met at the cottage that evening. The good news had given Polly and Flitters, in a measure, as much delight as it had Robert and Lucie, and even Mrs. Flitters was sincere in her congratulations.

Mr. Marsh's letter was read over and over again; but the closest study could get nothing more from it than the precise information it clearly conveyed. No hint as to the amount of fortune William Mc-

Gregor died possessed of, or the sum left to Robert; nevertheless, the ladies made their calculations, as to his legacy, which did not fall under fifty thousand dollars.

The next day Robert answered Mr. Marsh's letter, and informed that gentleman that he would be in New York at the time appointed. Now, at the near prospect of being able to pay him back, he had no hesitation in borrowing money from his friend Flitters, sufficient to pay his expenses to New York and back; but more than this he would not take. So Lucie, for a full week before his departure, was busy, renovating the well-worn suit he was to wear, and she performed such wonders in this refreshing line, that Polly and herself concluded that "Robert looked just downright splendid," as he stood upon the platform of the rear car of the train that was speeding with him to New York, and waved his hand to them in farewell.

When Robert McGregor reached New York, he lost no time in calling upon Mr. Marsh, whom he found a man about his own age, with affable, courteous manners.

"I have just received a note from Mr. Livingstone," he said, "in which he says the reading of your uncle's will has been postponed to the twenty-second, on account of the absence of some of the parties interested. Mr. Livingstone requested of me, Mr. McGregor, to bring you to see him, when you arrived. So if you are not otherwise engaged, I shall be ready to accompany you in a

few minutes. Have you seen to-day's Herald? You will find the morning papers on that table; just take a seat, and I shall be at your disposal in a short time."

Robert did as requested. Mr. Marsh's pen scraped along the legal cap, and the office clock gave forth its monotonous tick, tick.

After a little, Mr. Marsh laid down his pen, went into another room to change his coat, took his hat from off the rack, got his natty cane, and drawing on his gloves, announced to Robert that he was "at his service."

"Mr. Livingstone's bank is but a short distance from here, on Broadway," said Mr. Marsh, as they left the office.

"He is a banker, then," said Robert.

"Yes; did you not know that? The head of the Livingstone bank, one of the oldest banks in the country."

As they walked along, Robert could not help contrasting his appearance with that of the dapper lawyer beside him; for even two days' journey had made visible in his clothes some little darns that poor Lucy had so ingeniously concealed. "We well represent," he thought, "the poor client and his lawyer;" and so sensitive did this thought make him, that he imagined the people who passed them, were saying the same thing. It was then with somewhat of a dejected air that he went by the long counter of the bank, with its tempting piles of gold, silver and bills—behind wire netting—and

entered with the lawyer Mr. Livingstone's private office.

The latter, a most pleasing, venerable looking old gentleman, shook hands with Robert, cordially, and after asking a few questions as to his journey, he said:

"Has Mr. Marsh told you of the little delay we shall be obliged to give you?"

"Yes, sir," replied Robert.

"This is how the matter stands, Mr. McGregor," continued the banker. "Your uncle always transacted his banking business with us; although knowing him for years, our acquaintance was merely a business one. He has left a large amount of property to different institutions in this city, and Mr. Featherstone, a trustee of one of them, has written to me, to say that he will not be in town until the twenty-first, therefore I have changed the time to the twenty-second. Your uncle named me in his will as executor; beyond this trust I am not interested, not at all, personally. This, of course, is not your first visit to New York?"

"Indeed it is," answered Robert.

"Oh, then, we are only giving you a little time to look round you. Will you do me the favor of spending the evening with me at my country place. I will be happy to drive you out after bank hours."

"I thank you, sir," replied Robert, "but you must excuse me."

"I regret it. Well, then, come in to see me often while you are in town, and on the twenty-second

we shall meet at our friend Marsh's office, when I trust this business shall turn out satisfactorily to you."

While Mr. Livingstone was conversing with Robert, his clear, blue eyes were studying with interest the appearance and features of the latter, and when his visitors left the bank, the banker stroked his chin thoughtfully, as he said:

"Poor fellow, he looks as if his legacy will not come amiss to him; I hope it may be a good one."

Robert left Mr. Marsh at the door of his office, and then returned to his hotel, to write to Lucie.

"No one," he wrote, "has given me a hint of the amount of fortune coming to us; but I suppose my uncle died very rich, for Mr. Livingstone told me he has left large sums to public institutions. This delay will make a great inroad upon my slender purse, and I want to be home with my darlings on Christmas day. So if there is to be any delay in settling my legacy, I shall ask Mr. Livingstone to act for me. I think he would do so; you would like his appearance very much. He is a most kind-hearted looking old gentleman."

Robert took his letter to the post office, and then strolled about the streets. He had no one to call on; did not know one person in that big city, but the two gentlemen he had met since his arrival; for as he knew before he left home, Jenkins and his wife were in New Orleans, the former, as usual, on the eve of making a large fortune.

Very depressing in its effects is a large city to a

stranger with a slim purse; very depressing, but very salutary, is the lesson it gives to "our well-known and respectable fellow-citizen, Alderman Brass," who buys the morning paper, as he gets on board the eastern bound train, and reads over, for the fifth or sixth time, the complimentary notice of his intended visit east, and fully expects the eastern papers to copy it; but no sooner does he arrive in the big city, than an utter extinguisher falls upon his local greatness; nay, his very identity seems to be slipping away from him, and he feels that, if he should fall into the river, the heading of the eastern item, announcing the accident, would read: "The body of an unknown man found in the North River." To be sure, as likely as not, on his return home, a brass band will blow all the old, nauseous, petty vanity back into him, and thus obliterate the lesson.

Robert, being the most anxious, was the first to arrive at Mr. Marsh's office, on the twenty-second.

"You are early, Mr. McGregor," remarked the lawyer, as he shook hands with him. "The grave and reverend signors who represent the institutions to which your uncle has left bequests, will not be here for some time yet. Sit down and make yourself at home. There are newspapers if you wish to look them over."

Robert took one up and read a whole leader through, without understanding one sentence; he might as well be reading a language he did not understand. Although outwardly calm he was nerv-

ously excited, now that the time was come for the reading of his uncle's will.

"Poor Lucie," he thought, "no doubt she is just as anxious and nervous as I am this morning; I will send a telegram when I know the amount."

One by one, with short intervals intervening between each arrival, four gentlemen of sour visages, representing officially, gentle charity and christian love, entered the office. Robert was introduced to each as the nephew of Mr. William McGregor, and was evidently regarded by them as an interloper.

The first gentleman who arrived took his seat close to the wall, and pasted his head against it, and the other three ranged themselves alongside, in like position. They spoke in monosyllables, cautiously, giving side glances at each other.

There were big sums in this business; the old miser had cut up well, and they were not going to compromise themselves.

At length Mr. Livingstone arrived. He bowed familiarly to the gentlemen ranged along the wall, and shook hands with Robert; then Mr. Marsh, coming in from the front office, the banker handed him the will. Robert, feigning a calmness he was far from feeling, prepared to listen to the reading of it.

After describing real estate in different parts of the city of New York, which the testator died possessed of, and enumerating several large sums of money in securities, and lodged in bank, the will directed that all the real estate should be sold, and

the amount realized, together with the sums of money already mentioned, and the principal sum of ten thousand pounds, invested by the testator in the English funds, to be divided in equal shares, between four societies named in the will, and which were represented by the four gentlemen I have already spoken of as being present.

Then came the part referring to Robert; it said:

"To my nephew, Robert McGregor, of P——, in the State of Michigan, I leave all the property which a certain document directed to him, and now lodged in the Livingstone Bank, Broadway, will entitle him to."

"Here is the document, Mr. McGregor," said Mr. Livingstone, coming forward; "it is sealed, and in the exact condition as when lodged with us."

"Before this document is read," said one of the trustees, "I will ask Mr. Marsh if its contents can affect the bequests mentioned."

"We cannot know that," he said, "until we hear what the contents are. This may be a will of a later date, doing away with all former ones."

There was an uneasy movement among the trustees.

"But it is, doubtless," continued the lawyer, "the title-deed of property not mentioned in the will; it feels like parchment; open the cover, Mr. McGregor."

Thus directed, Robert, with a hand that despite all his effort, trembled, broke the seal; those present stooped forward, and saw him draw from its

cover an old moth-eaten rabbit skin—William McGregor's revenge. Surprise, and surprise alone, was depicted on every countenance save one, and a saucer-eyed man, the trustee of the Society for the Conversion of the Heathen, laughed outright.

Mr. Livingstone gave him a severe look; but the heartless laugh was of benefit to Robert at that moment of supreme agony. It helped to nerve him, as a dash of cold water will keep a person from fainting.

There he stood, pale, rigid, his eyes fixed on the cursed, moldering thing before him.

Mr. Livingstone went over to him. "There is some mistake here," said the banker.

"There is no mistake," replied Robert, without moving his eyes; for the whole scene in the woods years ago—Indian Dick, Jim, the diabolical look of hatred on his uncle's face—was passing like a panorama before him.

Mr. Livingstone spoke again in a kind voice: "Can you explain this, Mr. McGregor? Do you wish to do so?"

For the first time since the opening of the package, Robert looked up.

"Yes," he replied to Mr. Livingstone, "it is due to myself to do so." In a few words, he related the boyish trick played on the miser, and his subsequent anger. "And this is his revenge," he concluded, "although he could not have calculated how full and perfect it would be. I suppose, Mr. Marsh, I have no further business here;" and he moved to-

ward the door. But Mr. Livingstone interposed to prevent him.

"Do not leave yet, Mr. McGregor, or say that you will come home with me; my carriage is at the door."

But Robert shook his head and moved on.

"It is not safe," said Mr. Livingstone aside to Mr. Marsh, "to allow him to leave in the state of mind he is in."

Robert overheard the remark, and coming back, took the banker's hand. "There is no danger, sir," he said, with a sad smile, "I am neither a coward nor an infidel. I am going home, Mr. Livingstone, to my wife and children." And before any further remark could be made, he had left the office.

"Confound the whole business," said Mr. Livingstone; "I wish the old miser had not brought me into witnessing his deviltry. I wish, now, I had refused to act."

"You can withdraw yet," said the saucer-eyed trustee.

"I will think of it, sir," answered the banker, gruffly. "You are a friend to the heathen, I believe. Well, I may require your good offices, for, egad, after what I have just witnessed, I am half inclined to turn heathen myself."

The old gentleman was evidently out of humor, and walking into the outer office, remained there until the four trustees had taken their departure.

Then he burst in upon Marsh, with, "I say, Marsh, can't something be done?"

"How do you mean?"

"To smash this will, cheat old McGregor, the devil, and the heathen, and give the nephew what should be his by right. That infernal old rabbit skin, I should think, would convince any jury, of insanity."

"I am afraid," said the lawyer, smiling, "the testator, like Hamlet, had too much 'method in his madness,' to allow that point to be raised with the remotest chance of success. That was, indeed, a very distressing scene we have just witnessed."

"Very, very," said Mr. Livingstone. "This nephew, I should think, is not in very good circumstances; a perfect gentleman, too, in manner. Do you know anything about his affairs?"

"Yes, we had quite a confidential chat the day after we were at your bank. His father, of whom he speaks with the greatest reverence and love, left him quite well off; but he lost everything by the failure of a western bank, and a wild speculation he was induced to enter into; swindled, I should think," concluded the lawyer, shrugging his shoulders.

"Do you know what hotel he is stopping at?"

"No."

"Well, if he calls upon you before leaving town—he will, I should think—bring him to see me."

"I will do so," replied the other, as he bowed the good-natured banker out of the office.

When Robert McGregor left Mr. Marsh's office and reached the street, snow, accompanied with

fierce gusts of wind, was falling. Facing the storm, he walked on, finding relief in the big snow flakes that dashed against his throbbing temples. On, on he walked, conscious of a dull sensation in his head—not pain, but heaviness, and with but one thought passing and repassing through his mind, with the regularity of the swaying movement of the pendulum of a clock—home, home—home, home. On he walked, leaving crowds, and streets, and houses behind him, until he found himself outside the city, and his farther advance stopped by the deep snow that lay upon the ground. This sudden check recalled him, in a measure, to himself, and his mind began to free itself from the stupor that the shock of a terrible, humiliating disappointment had plunged it in. Then, through the storm and blinding snow, there came to him the sweet, loving face of Lucie, and her gentle words, "As God wills, Robert," seemed to sound in his ears. Claspings his hands, and looking upward, he repeated aloud, "As God wills." Even as he spoke, the storm commenced to abate, the leaden color of the sky changed to a vapory whiteness, the clouds divided, and God's blessed sun looked down upon the earth.

Retracing his steps, Robert found himself once more in the crowded, noisy streets. Carriages, filled with beautiful, fashionably-dressed women, passed him by, and once his progress was retarded by a bevy of gay young girls, that came trooping and laughing out of a store. Then he thought of his poor wife, anxiously and hopefully awaiting his

return, and the sad disappointment he was about to inflict upon her, and in the agony that thought brought with it, he clenched his hands.

Once, too, he thought, as the human stream swept by: "What if James Allen should come along now?" and for a little while after this, he regarded with interest the strange faces passing him by; but soon, with a sigh, he ceased to do so.

It may seem strange that the disappointment which the malice of his uncle had brought to him, should have affected Robert McGregor a hundred fold greater than the loss of his whole fortune.

But it must be remembered that when the first event occurred, he was young, fresh, strong, untouched, unbroken by care, and that the more we have suffered, the less are we able to endure; the bow continually bent, loses its elasticity.

In his objectless wandering, Robert had turned out of Broadway, up Park Row, into Chatham Street, and after a little time found himself in the midst of a labyrinth of squalid, narrow, ill-lighted streets—the Five Points of New York—where misery, disease, and crime hold high carnival.

At the time, this was a dangerous locality, even at noonday, and now the lamps were lighted; but the practiced eyes of the professional cut-throats and thieves of the Five Points, saw at a glance that Robert would be no profitable victim, and one fellow, who was lounging and smoking at the door of a low saloon, passing away the time until the hour for doing "a little job" up town—which might in-

clude murder—should arrive, actually walked half a street, to show Robert his way back to Broadway. The man felt complimented by the confident way the latter had gone up to him and made inquiry.

Once in Broadway, Robert had no difficulty in finding the hotel he was staying at. Tired and hungry from his long walk, he eat supper, and then retired to his room. Then he counted his money, and found, that after paying his hotel bill, he would have just enough left to pay his fare home.

On his way to New York, he had been thinking what kind of a present he should bring to Lucie. Well, he could judge best when he looked about him; it should be a stunner, any way, got up, little madame, regardless of cost. He was to bring a handsome present to Polly Flitters, too; and then, as for Christmas toys, why, he was to bring home a whole boxful, not to speak of a doll that could shut and open her eyes, just as well as little Mary herself, and was to be packed separately. Yes, a whole boxful, and the boys had bargained that they were to be allowed to smash open the box themselves, and take everything out of it.

During all the journey to New York, those little trifles and pleasant anticipations had filled Robert's mind, just as much as more serious thoughts, and now he was going home, bringing nothing back with him but his sad news.

He returned to the office of the hotel. Its noise and bustle helped to distract him; men were playing billiards in the room, and he sat looking on, as

if interested. At length, happily, nature came to the relief of weary mind and body, his eyes grew heavy, and when he went to bed, he fell into a deep, dreamless sleep.

The next morning, Robert McGregor left New York. Traveling over the Great Western Railroad, through Canada, he crossed over to Detroit the following morning. There was a train leaving in half an hour, which would pass by P——, but he shrank from arriving home in the daytime, so he waited for the train that was to leave at four in the afternoon, and would arrive at P—— about eight o'clock in the evening; poor fellow, he was a laggard now, going to that home he expected to have hurried to with such joy.

He had some acquaintances in Detroit, but he avoided the chance of meeting with any of them, and remained in the depot building. Half-past three brought another train from New York, and the waiting rooms became filled with passengers; so as soon as the train for P—— backed into the depot, Robert went on board and took his seat. He could see from the window of the car, passengers taking a hurried lunch at the long counter of the refreshment room. In a short time, the car in which he sat became pretty well filled with passengers, and two very loud young men, in dress and voice, took the seat on the other side of the car, opposite to where Robert sat.

With an admirable regard for their own comfort, they turned over the back of the seat in front of

them, thus making a double compartment, in which they placed coats and satchels to such an extent as to leave them its exclusive occupation, and as the car (if one was to judge by their swagger and loud talk,) seemed to belong to them, and the other passengers only riding on sufferance, no one was likely to dispute their right.

In fact, this arrangement was somewhat necessary for the accommodation of a new silk hat, which one of the young gentlemen wore on entering the car. This, after preparing a place for it, he carefully took off, and set gently down, substituting in its place a cap, which he took out of his pocket. But, though his head was under his cap now, it was evident that his mind—what little he had of it—followed his hat; he looked at it, rearranged its position, and finally threw a white handkerchief lightly over it; he treated it much as a fond mother might treat her child; but here the similitude ends, for he was not likely to spoil that hat, by no means; it was the hat that was likely to spoil him.

"All aboard!" says the conductor, walking toward the train. As he passes the door of the refreshment room, he looks in, and repeats, "All aboard!"

A square-shouldered, warm clad traveler, standing at the counter, turns round, catches the conductor's eye, and raising a glass in his hand, beckons to him, but the conductor, smiling, shakes his head, and again saying, "All aboard!" takes hold of the iron rail of one of the cars, preparatory to swing-

ing himself on board, when the train is in motion. The traveler drinks the contents of his glass, tosses some change on the counter, and hurrying out, is just in time to get on the platform of the rear car, as the train moves off. "A touch and go," he remarks, as he enters, and takes his seat nearest to the door.

Robert's seat is about in the middle of the car.

Daylight is fast fading away, and the gas is already lighted at the depot, when the train, with its ding, dong, dell notice, passes out.

The train which left on the afternoon of the 24th of December, and which was to pass by P——, consisted of an unusual number of passenger cars, to accommodate all those hurrying to home and friends, to spend the Christmas; consequently, it was fully half an hour after the train had started, before the conductor entered the car where Robert sat.

"Tickets!"

There was an immediate recourse to pockets and pocketbooks. Robert McGregor put his hand into his pocket for his ticket, the last of the batch he had received in New York; he could not find it; confused and frightened, he was still looking for it when the conductor came up to him, "Ticket!"

"I fear I have lost my ticket," said Robert, still continuing to search.

"Then your fare; where are you going too?"

"I am going to P——," answered Robert, standing up, and searching on the seat and floor of the

car. "I paid my fare through from New York; when I left the ferry-boat I had the ticket, but it is gone."

"Then your fare, four dollars and seventy-five cents, if you please."

This conversation had attracted the attention of the passengers in Robert's near neighborhood, and he felt that they were looking at him. A hot glow of shame came to his face.

The conductor, pulling out his memorandum book and pencil, repeated, "Four dollars and seventy-five cents, if you please."

"I have no money," said Robert, in a low voice, while beads of perspiration stood out on his forehead; "but I paid my fare, I assure you."

The scene was now becoming interesting to the passengers, particularly so to the two young fellows on the opposite side.

To see a man put off a train on a cold winter's day, is perhaps one of the most lively incidents that travelers can meet with. It breaks the monotony of a journey, incites to general and cheerful conversation, and tends to increase individual feelings of comfort and security.

As soon as Robert had told the conductor that he had no money, one of the two I have already noticed, said, in a stage whisper to his friend, "DEAD BROKE."

"Yes," replied the other, making a slight change in the position of the silk hat, "a dead beat, I should say."

The words went piercing into the poor gentleman's brain; he rose up, to resent, with a blow, the insult given to him, and met cold or amused looks on every side. Then the cowardice of poverty shoved him back into his seat, for to cause a disturbance, he remembered, would be to give a coloring of truth to the words of the well-dressed blackguard.

The conductor turned round to where the two friends were so comfortably seated, and when they handed their tickets to him, he said in no very pleasant voice, "You must take your traps out of that seat; there are persons in the next car standing up, and two people can't occupy four seats;" then, as he passed on, he said to Robert, quietly, "Look for your ticket, you may find it by the time I return."

"What's the row up there, Conductor?" asked the passenger who had taken his seat at the end of the car just as the train was leaving, "what's up?"

"A man who has lost his ticket," replied the conductor, "and has no money to pay his fare. I believe his story, but my orders are strict."

"Where is he going to?" asked the other.

"To the same place you are going," answered the conductor, looking at the ticket he had just taken up.

"To P——," said the passenger; "will you stay here for a moment, Cap', until I have a look at him?"

"Very well," replied the conductor, sitting down in the seat the other had left.

Walking up to the end of the car, the passenger remained there for a moment, and then turned round and commenced walking back.

After the conductor had left him, Robert made another fruitless search for his ticket, and then, with nerves all unstrung, and feeling that he was watched from every side, utterly harrassed and beaten down by the misfortunes, great and small, which pursued him, he sat with bowed head, waiting for the return of the railroad officer.

Nothing could be more dejected and sad than his whole appearance as he sat thus, and in striking contrast was it to the self-possessed bearing and well poised figure of the man approaching. But the moment the eyes of the latter rested upon Robert, an expression of amazement, of joyful recognition, lighted up his face. His lips were parted to give utterance to an exclamation of pleasure, but with wonderful presence of mind, he checked the impulse, in obedience to the thought that came almost simultaneously with the recognition.

"No," he thought, as he hurried past, "he shall never know I was witness to his suffering such humiliation. What can have happened to bring him to this?"

When he reached to where the conductor was, he caught his arm, and the latter felt that every nerve in the body of the man who held him, was quivering with excitement.

"Cap'," he whispered to the officer, "I have traveled three thousand miles to eat my Christmas din-

ner with that man. Here, take the fare," and he pulled a handful of gold out of his pocket. "And Cap', you're a good fellow, and will make a kind of apology to him; tell him it's all right, just to make him feel good, won't you, Cap?"

"Why don't you go and speak to him yourself, sir?"

"Because I don't wish him to know that I saw him put to shame in this way; he's proud and sensitive, or was, for I have been away in California, and we have not met for years, until I recognized him this moment. Oh, don't mind the change; but just tell him out loud, so that all those fellows may hear you, that it's all right, or something of the kind."

The conductor gave him a pleasant nod, and passed along. Just as he got near Robert, he stooped, and pretended to pick up a ticket.

"Here is the ticket, after all," he said, "I am sorry, sir, you should have such bother," and he put a check in the band of Robert's hat.

With a great sigh of relief the latter looked up.

"Thank you," he said, "you have been very kind;" and the conductor passed on, out of the car, to tell the mail agent and baggage-man the strange incident he had just witnessed, and the three philosophers—for all those who are in continual intercourse with the traveling public, become philosophical, to a certain extent, not without cause—confessed that this matter "beat them."

"I have been away in California." These were

his words. Yes, it was James Allen, brave, true, energetic, long-wished for Jim himself, come back to his friend, sitting in the same car with him, and the latter did not know it.

James, too, was changed, but for the better. He had grown more robust, and the promise that his youth had given of great strength, was now splendidly developed in his chest and limbs. His hair had grown darker and was cut quite short, and he wore a heavy beard; but there were two features unchanged by which he could be easily recognized, his clear grey eyes and turned up nose.

When the conductor left him, James Allen changed his position slightly, so that he could keep Robert well in view.

"Oh, my poor Robert," he murmured to himself, "what misfortune is it that has overtaken you; how changed, how poverty stricken he is. Oh, the wicked folly of my not writing to know how matters stood with him; but I never could imagine that in money affairs he would want my help. It's hard to be so near him and not clasp my arms around him, but it is for his sake I torture myself. And is this the way we meet. Is this the meeting I have looked forward to with such longings. No matter, we meet now, not to part again, and if money is his only trouble, I can set that all right. He never squandered the means his father left to him; some villain or villains must have swindled him."

All this and more he said in broken snatches,

sometimes burying his face in his hands, and then again peering into the gloom where Robert sat, while his broad chest rose and fell with the emotion he struggled with.

When the conductor again came round, James shook his hand warmly.

"You are a first rate fellow, Cap'," he said, "the next time I travel with you into Detroit, we must have a glass of wine together, and get better acquainted. And now I want you to do me another little favor."

"What is it?" asked the conductor, laughing. "Do you want to pay any one else's fare?"

"No; but is the American Hotel still in existence at P——?"

"Yes, a 'bus from it meets this train."

"Well, will you take these checks, and tell the baggage-master at P—— to send my baggage to the American; I will walk there myself, and do not want to be detained at the depot."

The conductor promised to do so, and after chatting for a few minutes with his new acquaintance, again left him to his own thoughts.

When the train reached P——, three or four passengers, including Robert, rose to leave the car; as they passed out of the door, Robert last, James Allen followed at a little distance.

Robert made no stay on the platform, but hurried on through the crowd, James following after, but at a distance, to prevent his being noticed by the former, who walked straight on for some time,

and then turned to the right. James' heart gave a throb of joy.

"He has the cottage yet," he said; "he is going there, thank God."

As Robert McGregor neared his home, his steps grew weary and slow, and twice he stopped altogether, and put his hand up to his head.

Each time he did so, James seemed on the point of rushing forward, but checked himself in time, to see Robert resume his slow walk; but when a turn brought Inverness Cottage full in sight, the latter's slow walk was changed almost into a run.

James, now terribly excited, hurried after, still faster, and lessening the distance between them.

When Robert reached the gate of the cottage, James drew up beneath the shadow of a tree. He saw his friend enter at the gate, and pass up the gravel walk; then the hall door opened, a woman came running down to meet him, and a woman's arms were flung lovingly around his neck.

The watcher clasped his hands in joy.

"Thank God! Thank God! Oh, thank God!" he murmured; "here is nothing that I cannot set right," and he hurried off in an opposite direction.

Lucie sat on a low stool at her husband's feet, and holding his hands between both her own, listened to the recital of his late disappointment. Every now and then she pressed the hands she held, or filled up the pauses in his sad story, with words of endearment and encouragement. But when he came to speak of his adventure in the

railroad car, and in a husky, broken voice, told of the shame, humiliation, and insult he had been forced to endure, she hid her face for a moment, and pressing her forehead down upon the hand that rested upon his knees, drove back the tears valiantly.

From the moment of her husband's return, she had noticed what a terrible change the last few days had wrought in him. His face was haggard, pale and flushed by turns, and the dull sadness of his eyes sometimes gave place to a wild look. She felt that she required all her strength for both now, and dare not give way to the luxury of tears. When she raised her head again, Robert was sadly gazing at three little stockings that hung down from the wall, with some toys and candy arranged under each.

"And this is Christmas eve," he said. "Where did those things come from, Lucie?"

"Polly Flitters played Santa Claus in your absence," she answered.

"Have the children been expecting me?"

"We did not know whether to expect you or not; at all events, I thought it better to coax them to go to bed."

"I am glad not to meet the disappointed faces of my darlings, to-night," he said.

"Oh, Robert," she answered, "the children will be just as satisfied with these toys as they would be with the ones you promised."

"Promised!" he repeated, starting up, and walk-

ing about the room excitedly. "Oh, my darlings, your poor father should promise nothing but new misfortunes, every day; they follow him, haunt him, crush him; why can't they—"

He did not finish the sentence, for Lucie's arm went twining round his waist. With gentle force, she got him to sit down again, and taking her old place, looked up into his face.

"Yes, Robert," she said, in a low, sweet voice, "this is Christmas Eve, the eve of the day Christ came on earth to suffer for us. And what are our sufferings to his? He, the sinless one, buffeted, spit upon, and nailed to a cross between two thieves." Then kneeling on the stool, she nestled her head against his breast, still looking up into his eyes.

"Robert, my own, my darling, my love," she murmured.

If there was an evil spirit hovering there, it fled before the light of a pure, holy love, stronger than it.

Robert rose, holding Lucie, still clinging to his breast.

"My sweet wife," he whispered, "you have saved me; listen to the prayer I learned from your lips—'as God wills.'"

At that moment the door bell rang. Each looked at the other.

"Lucie," said Robert, "I am not able to see any one to night."

"It is likely only some one with a message from

Polly Flitters," she answered. "She left here about twenty minutes before you came, and said there was some little toy she had forgotten, and would send over."

So saying, she left Robert standing in the parlor, and went to the door.

When she opened it, a man, muffled up to the eyes, handed her a package and letter, saying, as he did so, "For Mr. McGregor," and before she could ask a question, he was gone.

Lucie returned to her husband. "A man handed me these for you, Robert, and then hurried off," she said.

In handing the package—which was somewhat weighty—and letter to Robert, the former fell, the paper burst open, and a lot of gold coins rolled out upon the floor. Robert started, and stooping, picked up a gold eagle.

"What is this?" he said, excitedly. "Gold. Oh, Lucie, there is some mistake here. Gather up this money, and put it safely by. It is not for us, Lucie. How unfortunate the package should fall and open."

Lucie was equally surprised, but more self-possessed.

"The mistake is not ours, Robert," she said. "At all events, (taking it from his hand,) this letter is for you; it is directed, Robert McGregor; open it, Robert."

Taking the letter hastily from her hand, Robert tore open the envelope. When he read the first

line, he hastily looked down at the signature. Then uttering a cry of joy, so loud that he awoke the two little boys sleeping in the room above, he caught Lucie up, and whirled her round the room.

For a moment she thought that his senses had forsaken him; but he reassured her by exclaiming, "Lucie—Lucie, Jim has returned, Jim is alive, Jim has returned."

Then—each holding one side of the paper—Robert read, breaking in upon every sentence with some ejaculation of surprise or joy:

"Old fellow: I have come back safe and sound, warranted in wind and limb. I thought to be with you before this time, but have been delayed, so I send you this letter by a friend, and will follow, myself, soon after; old boy, look out for me at any time.

"To show you that it is myself, and not my ghost, that has arrived, I send you the two hundred dollars that you lent me when I was leaving; but not the interest, Robert. Dear Robert, it will take a lifetime to pay that, old boy. Dear old fellow, we must never part again when we meet. JIM."

That was all; but it was enough to change a house of mourning into one of joy; enough to bring the old light to Robert's eyes, and the courage to his heart. With Jim at his back, he felt strong enough to take a new wrestle with the world, and trip up the heels of slippery fortune. And Lucie, poor Lucie, who had so bravely borne up against crushing sorrow, now wept; but they were tears of joy.

Soon two new actors, not noticed for some time, came upon the scene. Standing in the doorway, in their long night dresses, were the two little boys, Robert and James, endeavoring to crook the sleep out of their eyes, and when they succeeded in this, they simultaneously rushed forward, calling out, "Papa! papa! papa!" Robert snatched them up in his arms, one at a time, and curveted round the room with them, much as he did with Lucie. Then their eyes fell upon the bright gold pieces their mother was picking up off the floor, and James, clapping his hands, asked if Santa Claus had brought all that money.

"Yes, James," answered his father, laughing. "Santa Claus, our own special Santa Claus, brought it all. A new name for Jim, Lucie; we must give it to him. Listen to the way he begins his letter: 'Old fellow, I have come back safe and sound,' so like Jim, I think I hear him saying it. 'Old boy, look out for me at any time.' Why, Lucie, he may be here to-morrow. Would not that be grand? Christmas day and all. Dear old Jim;" and then, for the twentieth time, he re-read James Allen's letter.

Then Lucie, drawing the two children to her, knelt down, and lifting up her beautiful face, still wet with tears, said, "Heavenly Father, we thank thee that thou hast permitted us to see thee in the darkness and in the storm; and now, we bless thee in the sunlight."

The children were soon back again to the toys

they had found arranged under their stockings, and Robert told them to take down their own but not to touch Mary's. Climbing up on chairs, they did so, and out rolled from each a bright gold coin. Santa Claus was behaving splendidly this Christmas.

"You must tidy up a room for James, Lucie," said Robert; "he will see a great change;" and even in his new-found happiness a shade of sadness came to his face.

The hours passed unheeded by, as husband and wife talked over the return of the long absent friend—the one, of all earth, that Robert's weary spirit had ever yearned for—and with the children, the toys had "murdered sleep," so that the bonny chimes of Christmas were ringing before the happy little household retired for the night.

Robert was up bright and early the next morning, and burst in upon the Flitters as they sat at breakfast, his face all aglow with happiness.

"A merry Christmas," he said, shaking hands all around.

"Welcome back," said Mr. Flitters, giving him a hearty shake. "How much?"

In the joy of James' return, Robert had actually ceased to think of his late disappointment, and for a second did not comprehend the question; then remembering, he said, "Oh, nothing, not one cent, Mr. Flitters. It is not of that I am come to tell you; but James Allen, the dear friend that you heard us speaking about so much, Polly, has come back from California."

It was now that Mrs. Flitters showed herself to be the able woman she really was. Robert's friend had returned from California, with a large fortune doubtless, and Polly was, as yet, unprovided for. Extending her hand for the second time to Robert, Mrs. Flitters said, with her blandest smile, "I congratulate you, Mr. McGregor."

But Flitters sat staring at his plate. In his experience, money was the best friend a man could meet with, and Robert had missed that.

It is noon—Robert sits at the window fronting the street, reading or attempting to read. Suddenly a hack pulls right up at the gate, and a man with a dark red beard, jumps out upon the sidewalk. In a moment Robert is out of the house, and the two loving friends, the playmates of childhood and of boyhood, are locked in each other's arms. "Robert"—"Jim." Then comes Lucie down the walk.

"Let me out, you jealous fellow," says James Allen, laughing, and breaking away from Robert, "I must and shall kiss your wife," and taking Lucie's outstretched hands, he imprints a bearded kiss upon her cheek.

"Well," soliloquizes the hackman, as he turns his horses slowly round, "I'm darned if them folks aint glad to see one another."

When the first joyous excitement had somewhat subsided, how much the friends had to tell each other.

Naturally, the first thing they spoke of, was the death of Doctor McGregor.

"Here is his present, Robert," said James, producing the watch that the former had given to him from his father, the day that they had parted. "I prize it as I prize every memory of him, every word I heard from the lips of the best and noblest of men. You remember what he said to me: 'Be a true man in every thing, James, and you will be a gentleman.' I tell you, Robert, those words have been a talisman to me; I have ever kept them before me, and endeavored to live up to them."

"I do not believe," replied Robert, "that any one ever came in close contact with him without being benefited by it."

"I must tell you," said James, "that I heard of your father's death, and of your marriage, some six months after the latter took place. I heard of both events from a son of Weasel's, who came out to California. You remember little Weasel and his Sunday lectures, and what disrespectful scamps we were."

And James laughed so heartily that the children joined in full chorus.

"I did not know," said Robert, "that a son of Weasel's went to California."

"Oh, yes," replied James. "And a very decent kind of young fellow he is, and doing well. Although I had adhered to my foolish resolve of not writing, I had kept pretty good track of you," he continued, "until I heard of your marriage with my old flame, Lucie, here. Oh, you need not blush, madam, you jilted me in my tender years, and

that's all about it," and James gave another of his contagious laughs.

"Well," he continued, "when I heard of your marriage, I just said to myself, 'they are settled down now, so I need give myself no more trouble about them, but keep steady at work, until I have enough to return with.' Since I came into Michigan, Robert, I heard, by chance, enough to make me know that in not writing to you I have acted far more than foolishly—I have acted badly. But, thank God, I find you in your old home, with your wife and children around you, and here is my namesake, Jim, a sturdy evidence, on two stout legs of his own, to show that you had not forgotten your careless friend. Come, now, tell me all about yourself, and then I'll commence my narrative in the most approved style—'My name is Norval,' and so forth."

Thus James rattled away, until he had learned from Robert all the events affecting the latter, which had transpired, including his late visit to New York, and the disappointment it resulted in.

And now James had cause to congratulate himself on understanding his friend's sensitive nature so well as to have refrained from disclosing his presence to Robert on board the train, for the painful incident which James had witnessed in the railroad car, Robert never alluded to.

"It makes one's flesh creep," said James, "to think of that old man, carrying his hatred for so many years locked up in his own breast, and then,

out of the very grave, as it were, dealing his revengeful blow. I should have been with you, Robert, to take my share, for you remember, the bogus fur trade that led to all this, was my bright plan."

"It was the plan of two foolish little boys, James," answered Robert; "but let us not speak any more of this man, or think of him, if we can help it."

"That's right," said his friend, "and after all, he has only wounded skin deep."

"The wound was deeper at the time than even he could have anticipated," replied Robert; "but the sight of you, old fellow, has healed it up," and for the twentieth time, since meeting, they shook hands.

Then James commenced giving an account of his adventures in California.

"Nothing romantic about them, Robert," he said, laughing; "some disappointments, some hard knocks, and plenty of honest work, that is all."

It would seem, from James' story, that he had no very great sudden streaks of luck, either good or bad, during his stay in California. He worked constantly in the mines, never going to San Francisco, unless on business, and then neither exchanging gold dust for bad whiskey, or fighting the tiger, and after twelve years, found himself worth some thirty thousand dollars.

"A big sum for me," he said, "so I thought I would come back and pitch my tent beside you, Robert. I find it hard to forgive myself for not

corresponding with you, and you must help me to do so."

"How, James?"

"By letting me do what you would do, were you in my place, Robert. By letting me show that I am not forgetful of the compact of friendship we made, long ago, under Prince Charlie's tree. I have come to live with you, to share with you; you must not drive me away."

"No, no," replied Robert, "I have longed too much for you to do that."

"Thank you, thank you, old fellow. Now I have something to propose, but in the first place, it is altogether subject to your approval, Mrs. McGregor, so I will put it in the shape of a question."

"How would you like to go farther west, and that Robert and I should take two large tracts of government land, and become farmers on a grand scale?"

Lucie's face beamed with joy. "That is the very choice I would make," she said, "had I the power of choosing."

"And you, Robert?" asked James.

"Oh, James," he answered, "I am dazzled with the picture of happiness that you have conjured up, but—"

"I will have no buts," interrupted James, "if they refer to money matters; they are unworthy of both of us, Robert. Do you remember what you said to me when I was refusing to take the two hundred dollars from you? You waived me off

with, 'Remember, the money question is settled.' Just so. Now the money question is settled, another arises, Mrs. McGregor—a wife question. I certainly do not want to go upon one of those vast prairies in Iowa or Minnesota, without a wife, and, Lucie, I am strongly under the impression that you and Robert, somehow, owe me a wife."

Lucie clapped her hands as she replied, laughing:

"James, I have the dearest little wife for you; the world does not hold a better. Was all the gold in California melted into one lump, she would be worth it."

"Softly, Lucie," said James, "I am afraid you are going beyond my figure. Ah, I see how it is, she's homely as old Harry."

"On the contrary, she is very pretty."

"What's her name?"

"Polly Flitters. The Flitters are our nearest neighbors, and Polly is my nearest and dearest friend."

"That last is the best recommendation of all, Lucie; but do not praise her any more, because she may refuse me—very likely, indeed; you know I am unlucky in love scrapes, and in that case I don't want to fret too much."

What a happy day was this at Inverness Cottage. One of those days to be marked with a white stone in life's pilgrimage, and long after the pleasant prattle of the children was hushed in sleep, Lucie, Robert and James, loath to part, re-

mained conversing in the parlor. James had brought the conversation back to his farming scheme, and Robert had consented to borrow five thousand dollars from him; it was also settled that early the following spring the two friends should go west, to hunt up a location.

It was near twelve o'clock when Lucie left the parlor to get a bedroom lamp, and Robert and James, standing by the stove, were still eagerly conversing, when they heard the startling cry of fire. Opening the door quickly, Flitters was seen rushing across the street, bare-headed, and with nothing on but his drawers and shirt, while at every step he bellowed, "Fire! fire!" At the same instant, from the lower windows of his house, the flames came bursting out.

Then upon the night air there rose a woman's piercing cry, and two white forms were seen at an upper window, Polly Flitters with her arm around her mother, who still continued to scream and gesticulate wildly.

"My wife, my child!" exclaimed Flitters, catching Robert's arm, "oh, save them, save them!"

James Allen was about rushing across the street, when Robert called to him, "Stay by me, James," he said, "and together we will be able to save them."

Then he ran round to the side of the cottage, and was back in a minute with a short ladder on his shoulder and an ax in his hand. Handing the latter to James, they hurried across to the burning

house. "Oh, Robert," said James, as they ran along, "that ladder is too short."

"Not for the use we will put it to," answered the other. "Keep close to me; if we separate, they are lost."

The roof of Mr. Flitters' kitchen was much lower than that of the main building, and attached to the kitchen was a wood-shed with a still lower roof. To this point Robert made. The moment he placed the ladder against the shed, James comprehended his plan of action. Just as they reached the roof of the shed, and were about to draw up the ladder, Flitters appeared. Telling him to hurry back to the street and call out to those at the window to keep up their courage, for help was at hand, Robert and James mounted by the ladder to the kitchen roof, and from thence to the roof of the main building. Drawing up the ladder again after them, Robert, followed by James, made for where he knew the skylight was situated. It was shut, but with two blows of the ax, James smashed it in, and putting the ladder through the aperture thus made, the two leaped down and found themselves in the garret of the burning house. Then, Robert leading, they rushed down into the room at the window of which Mrs. Flitters and Polly still remained. The boards burned under their feet as they crossed the room. "Save my mother!" exclaimed poor Polly, and James obeyed her, by catching Polly herself up in his arms, while the heavier burden fell upon Robert's shoulders. Hurrying away, they had but

reached the garret, when the floor of the room they had just left, fell in. There was not a moment to lose. Bearing Polly on one arm as if she was but a feather's weight, James, who required no guidance now, ran up the ladder to the roof, but Robert, burdened with Mrs. Flitters, could not ascend in any such graceful style, so he even carried her as the "pious Æneas" bore his father from the ruins of Troy. Descending by the same way they had ascended, Robert and James appeared in the street, to receive the lusty cheers of those that the fire had attracted to the spot, and hurrying across to the cottage, James consigned the now fainting form of Polly to Lucie's outstretched arms, while Mrs. Flitters, sliding from Robert's back, had a good, comfortable faint on the sofa, from which she was aroused by Flitters flinging nearly half a pail of cold water over her—the first and last time he ever took such a liberty with that able woman.

"The servants, Mr. Flitters?" cried Robert, hurrying in from the street, to which he had returned, after depositing Mrs. Flitters on the sofa.

"They are safe," replied Mr. Flitters. "The two girls went to spend the Christmas with some friends, and are not to return until morning."

"Then no matter about the house," said Robert. "Thank God, all are safe."

Richard Flitters, Jun., was at this time away at a boarding school, so that when the two servant girls were accounted for, Robert was satisfied of the safety of all the inmates.

"The house is fully insured, and so is the furniture," said Flitters. Of course they were; all the elements combined could not injure Flitters in money matters.

Lucie gave up her own room to Mrs. Flitters and Polly, rolled them up in warm blankets, and administered to them strong tea, while Robert restored the ruddy color to Flitters' cheek by a generous bumper of hot-stuff, which the little man drank, sitting at the stove, with a red-striped table-cover thrown over his shoulders, like a Roman toga. Indeed, so exhilarating was the effect of the hot-stuff on the little man, that it made him quite jolly, and somewhat reckless; he slapped Robert and James frequently on the back, and vowed that "they were the best and bravest fellows in the world," and when he was passing, on his way to bed, the room in which Mrs. Flitters and Polly were, he knocked at the door loudly with his knuckles, exclaiming as he did so:

"Good-night, old woman—good-night, Polly."

Mrs. Flitters could scarcely believe her ears; the idea of his addressing her in vulgar slang. He did so once before, after returning from a farewell supper, given to him by some of his Bowery friends, before leaving New York.

"Where are you going to, sir?" she asked, in muffled sternness, from beneath the blankets.

"Hic—guess Jim Allen and I are—hic—to bunk together," answered Flitters.

"Polly," said Mrs. Flitters, in suppressed wrath,

"as I am a suffering woman, your father is vulgarly intoxicated. Did you hear his low language, and did you hear him calling Mr. Allen—the gentleman who saved your life, my child, a most romantic incident, which might lead to a great deal—calling him Jim. Why don't you answer me, Polly?"

But Polly could not answer, for she had the bed-clothes over her head, and was shaking with laughter.

Flitters, notwithstanding the effects of the strong bumper, would have been the first up in the house next morning, but that he had to wait in bed until Robert brought him some clothes to wear. Robert being rather tall, and Flitters decidedly short, the garments provided were but a poor fit. The coat, a swallow-tail, faded blue, was entirely too long in the waist and sleeves; it would have improved the fit of the pants, to have cut off about half a foot in the length, and but one button of the vest could be made to close. But Flitters was in the best of good humor, and laughed heartily with Robert, as the latter assisted him in his toilet.

Lucie and James Allen were already in the breakfast room when Polly entered.

The wardrobe which Mrs. McGregor had left at her disposal was neither very extensive, new, or fashionable; but, like Lucie herself, Polly was one of those tidy little bodies that lend a charm to what they wear, instead of having to borrow from the taste of the dressmaker, and with the effect of last

night's fright still robbing her cheeks of their roses, she never looked more interesting.

"Oh, Polly, love!" exclaimed Lucie, going forward to meet her. "This is Mr. James Allen, Polly. He was very anxious yesterday to make your acquaintance, and I promised to introduce him; but, if I am not mistaken, somebody put some other body into my arms last night; so I conclude that the introduction has already taken place."

All the roses were now back into Polly's cheeks, but, nevertheless, Lucie's playful bantering ("most wicked of her," Polly said afterwards,) could not prevent her from expressing, with grateful warmth, her thanks to James Allen.

"I consider myself the luckiest fellow in the world, Miss Flitters," he replied, "in being able to do you a service; but Robert deserves most of the praise. But for his coolness and presence of mind, I shudder to think what might have happened. Did you make any attempt to go down stairs?"

"Yes, but the flames and smoke drove us back, and I did not know until, thanks to you, I was safe in the house here, but that poor papa, who slept down stairs, was lost."

And again the pretty face grew pale, and the young girl shivered.

"Oh, you must not think any more about the danger you have all so happily escaped, Miss Flitters," said James. "All's well that ends well, you know."

"Here is Mrs. McGregor," he continued, turning

round; but Lucie had left the room, and, would you believe it, Jim then and there commenced to make love to Polly Flitters—to be sure, he had fallen in love the night before, when her young, frightened heart was beating wildly against his own—and Polly—well, no, I won't tell any stories of Polly just now. Let the poor little thing first recover from her fright, with Cupid—cunning urchin, disguised as gratitude—attending physician.

Before going down to breakfast, Flitters paid a visit to Mrs. Flitters, who still remained in bed.

With a vague remembrance of his jolly "good-night" a few hours before, and consequently some misgivings as to his reception, he entered the room; but his friend, Mrs. McGregor, had given such a highly colored account of his daring attempt to get upon the roof of the burning house, being only prevented by Robert's drawing up the ladder, and of his frantic grief while the danger lasted, that his wife's heart was softened toward him, and in this mood she received him.

"How do you feel, my dear," said Flitters, stooping down and kissing her.

"Shattered, Flitters," she replied, "shattered. We have been a long time together, Richard."

"And will be, I hope, my dear," said Flitters.

"I don't know, Flitters; a man can bear a great deal, (so Flitters often thought,) but when a woman, with her finer organization, gets shattered—ah, dear me! Polly would take care of you, Flitters, if I was gone."

"Why, how you talk, Bessy. There is nothing the matter with you or any of us, thank God, but a big fright. They are all merry and laughing below; get up and join them."

"How can I get up, Flitters," she answered, "without any clothes? My beautiful wardrobe is all burned."

"Never mind the clothes," said her husband, "I will sign a check, and you can fill it up, and get all you want for yourself and Polly."

"You are a good creature, Flitters," she replied. Then with animation, which showed that all the shattering was completely forgotten, she added, "But I must get some things immediately made for Polly and myself." And she forthwith commenced to give her husband instructions, which set about a dozen dressmakers and sewing girls busy at work half an hour after Flitters had eaten his breakfast and gone down town.

As he trotted down the garden walk, with the legs of the long pants and sleeves of the blue coat tucked up, with a hat entirely too large for him, and the coat tails almost touching the ground, he bore a most ludicrous resemblance to the "Artful Dodger," when Oliver Twist first made that young gentleman's acquaintance; but when Flitters reached the gate and turned round to wave his hand to his friends at the hall door, his honest, pleasant face did away with the resemblance altogether.

So well did Mr. Flitters perform his wife's com-

missions, that she was enabled to appear, in excellent humor, at the supper table that evening. With the utmost warmth and sincerity, she thanked Robert and James for their brave rescue of herself and her daughter. In fact, the shock she had received (this looking at death right between the eyes) had a very beneficial, lasting effect on Mrs. Flitters. Robert McGregor used to say afterwards, "that she had been tried in fire, and came forth purified."

So with Robert himself. He could not but feel a proper pride in the part he had acted during the fire. Every one was praising him, and the "Trumpet of Liberty" sounded his fame through the length and breadth of the land. All this, together with the release from harassing thoughts, and above all, the companionship of James—his back, as he called him—helped to restore vigor and elasticity to his mind and body, and, as Lucie expressed it, "he was coming back to his old self more and more every day."

But good fortune, which had now taken up the running, seemed determined not to stop until it had distanced, and left completely out of sight, the misfortunes which had so long pursued Robert McGregor.

The day after the fire, Mr. Flitters and his family went to board at a hotel, until he could provide himself with a house, and James Allen was a constant visitor of their's. Whether he went to get lessons in refined manners from Mrs. Flitters, or to

study "the art of love" with Polly, I leave for the present to be guessed at.

Every day, too, on her way to the post office, Lucie called.

Why did Mrs. McGregor insist on going herself every day to the post office? Ah, that was Lucie's little secret, and it had but such a tiny hope to buoy it up, that she did not reveal it to any one.

Robert, on his return from New York, had spoken so well of Mr. Livingstone, and described him as such a kind, benevolent old gentleman, one, too, who evidently sympathized with him, that Lucie had got it fixed somehow in her head, that this good banker, as executor to William McGregor's will, might find some way to help Robert. If a letter with good news should come, she would have the joy of handing it to Robert.

But as week after week went by, her hope grew less and less, and she resolved to get rid of the idea altogether, when, lo! just as she made her last call at the post office, a letter, with the address of the Livingstone bank printed on the outside, was placed in her hand. Lucie never knew how she got home that day. Polly Flitters used to say that Lucie certainly flew by the windows of the hotel; but home she was, standing before Robert and James, flushed and panting, with the letter in her hand; she held it forth to Robert, without speaking, and opening the envelope, he read:

"DEAR SIR:—I rejoice that I have good news to tell you. I find that William McGregor, for many

years before his death, did not draw the interest on the ten thousand pounds which he had in the English funds.

"This interest, with compound interest, amounts to the sum of fifteen thousand dollars, and as your uncle only disposed of the principal in his will, you, as his heir-at-law, become entitled to this sum of fifteen thousand dollars, which I hold subject to your order. I hope you will come in person for the money, that we may renew our acquaintance under happier circumstances.

"Again congratulating you in all sincerity,

"I remain,

"GEO. D. LIVINGSTONE."

In imagination, look in at the happy tableau within the cottage. Imagine the joy of the inmates. James Allen felt that in the minutes immediately following the reading of the letter, husband and wife should be left alone.

"Hurra!" he cried, picking up his hat. "I want but to know one thing now, to make me the happiest dog alive!" and banging the hall door, he was gone.

Within an hour he did know that "one thing," for Polly Flitters told him that she loved him.

Early in the spring, Polly Flitters and James Allen were married. It would be a complete failure on my part did I attempt a description of Polly's bridal dress; for though I was at her wedding, I noticed not the color or texture of her robe, so interested was I with her innocent, happy, pretty face.

But I have a bewildered recollection that Mrs.

Flitters' "get up" was something overwhelming, grand, awful, in fact, for I saw the verger of the church pale and stagger before it, as he showed her into a pew, and saw him restored to his normal official state by a lively pinch, administered by Flitters, as he passed in after his wife.

"Where are your gloves, Flitters?" she asked, eying his bare hands. Flitters at once put his hand up to the inspiring spot, and, sure enough, there lay the white kids.

Before leaving the house, Mrs. Flitters had given these gloves to her husband, with positive instructions to wear them, and he had put them in his hat, and thus they came to rest on the bald spot. He now looked at them, polished his head vigorously, and whispered to Mrs. Flitters,

"It's really very extraordinary, my dear. I have no idea how—"

"Put them on, sir," interrupted the able woman, severely.

A few days after Polly and James had set out on their bridal tour, Robert made a journey to Tom Mahon's. He had promised Mrs. Mahon to go and tell her when his good luck came to him, and now it had come, and he was on his way to fulfill his promise. You may well believe that the buggy in which he rode was filled with presents from Lucie to Mrs. Mahon.

The good woman was making butter when Robert drove up to the farm-house. She saw him alighting. Down fell dish and butter into the

churn, and out of the house rushed Mrs. Mahon to greet him.

"You have come to tell me of the good luck," she exclaimed.

"Indeed I have, Mrs. Mahon," Robert answered, taking both her hands, and giving them a hearty shake.

"God be praised," she said. "Well, didn't I tell you God was the strongest, praised be His holy name. Come into the house. Oh, but you're more welcome than the flowers of June. Here, Pat, take Mr. McGregor's horse, and Johnny, run quick and call your father; oh, won't Tom be proud and happy when he hears the news. My daughter, Kittie, Mr. McGregor. The house is all tossed up, but no matter, God be praised. Oh, He was ever and always good."

And so ran on Mrs. Mahon, while with her check apron she wiped away the tears of joy that came brimming to her eyes.

Robert remained with his friends two days, and before he left, it was almost settled upon that when Tom Mahon got a purchaser for his farm in Michigan, he would move with his family out West, and locate in Robert's neighborhood, so the latter promised to look out for a good location for him; but he had yet to select one for himself.

The marriage of James changed his and Robert's programme somewhat, as they now resolved to bring their wives, and all of Robert's family along with them when they went West, so that they would

be in a position to settle right down, when they found a location to suit. This arrangement was carried out on the return of Mr. and Mrs. Allen, and on the 1st of May the two families left Michigan for the still farther West, and on the same day the Flitters moved into the cottage, having rented it from Robert.

Close to a clear lake, whose shores are shaded by magnificent trees, Robert McGregor and James Allen, have their homes. Their houses built in the timber, are well protected from the cold winds of winter, and their farming lands stretch out over the broad prairie in front. They have done much around their places to add to the beauty of scenery that nature had already made beautiful.

Each enjoys as much happiness as a good wife, a pleasant home, and a true friend can give, and these can give a good deal.

The second year after the two families had settled out West, Mrs. Flitters was sent for in hot haste, and a little while after her arrival, the cry of an infant—the sweetest music that ever fell on a young mother's ears—was heard in James Allen's house.

Shortly after the birth of Polly's child, Mrs. Flitters discovered a lucky mole low down on the infant's shoulder, and from this discovery, Mrs. Flitters augurs that when the child grows up, she will make a wealthy marriage—the great essential for which, the Mrs. Flitters of society suppose female babies come into the world.

Now that Flitters has taken his son into partnership, "Flitters & Son" being the name of the firm, he spends part of every summer with James and Robert. The first time he visited them, they took him out to hunt, and he handled his gun so awkwardly that nothing but his usual good fortune saved him from shooting himself or one or other of his friends, so they have selected a safer amusement, and take him on fishing excursions.

He knows nothing of the "gentle art;" but that makes no difference, he catches more than both his friends, and, with the gentlest pity beaming in his eyes, he takes the fish off his hook and drops them into his basket.

Simpson, who married his daughter, Anna Maria, is now a prosperous merchant.

Jenkins has been very successful of late, in the characters of Bull and Bear, in Wall street; but sooner or later, men of his loose principles are apt to fall lower and lower in the social scale, nor is there likely to be an exception in his case, for his friends speak of running him for Congress.