

# MALBROOK

A Novel.

*Miss Jane Malbrook Perkins*



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TO  
MY VERY KIND FRIEND,  
J. M. B....., Esq.,  
THIS BOOK  
IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED,  
BY  
RUTH WOODLAND.

# MALBROOK.

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## CHAPTER I.

ASTER, Restless! faster! 'In thunder, lightning, and in rain, when shall we three meet again?' That's you, I, and the storm, old horse. Phew! that wind fairly takes one's breath, and those clouds, though certainly magnificent, are almost too threatening for comfort, when one is eight miles from home." And the speaker cast an anxious glance at the sky.

Clouds, almost inky in their blackness, hung heavily overhead, seeming only to wait the command to dash their contents in a sea of water on the earth. The road over which she was traveling, wound itself between mountains, whose summits, towering almost to the clouds, seemed vainly to offer, as a libation of peace to the angry storm-king, the few stunted shrubs that existed on the mighty elevation. The day was dying, and the little light that remained was hiding among the clouds, giving place to darkness, only

rendered the more dense by flashes of lightning, each more vivid than the preceding.

Peal after peal of thunder, following each other in quick succession, were met by their echoes, rivaling them in power which tossed them relentlessly from mountain to mountain, now growing louder, then fainter and fainter, until they died away in the distance. The word is given; the clouds, wearied of their burden, burst, and the rain falls in torrents, dashing in sheets down the sides of the mountains, mingling angrily on the road between. Onward she urges her horse, then, suddenly drawing rein, assumes a listening attitude. Surely she is not mistaken; echo never yet gave back so plainly the answering step of horse; turning, she finds she is not the only one on whom the storm is venting its fury, for behind her are horse and rider, seeming so like one piece of creation, as they approach at flying speed, that one might think a stray Centaur was again traversing the earth. She is thrilled with joy, on finding she is not alone in the fearful tempest, but remembering that her companion is unknown, she puts double spurs to her horse. Every instant the horse's hoofs behind sound louder and nearer; less and less grows the distance between the riders, and now they are side by side. On and on they press, seeming to seek some hidden goal, each determined the other shall not gain the front. She glances not at her companion, but, giving free rein to her horse, calls him repeatedly by name to press forward. The wind has loosened the ribbon that

confines her hat, and the plume, heavy with rain, drags it to the earth. She heeds it not, so intent is she on the race; nor notices that her companion has fallen into the rear, and even stopped his horse. But he is again at her side. Onward they speed, mile after mile sliding rapidly beneath the feet of their flying steeds, yet no advantage is gained, and the goal is at hand. With redoubled speed the stranger gains the lead, bounding on faster and faster, until lost in the darkness. With disappointment and chagrin she hurries forward, and now she has stopped before the open gateway of her home. A vivid flash of lightning illumines the scene, and there, with brow uncovered, is the victor of the race. She returns his triumphant but respectful bow, with a glance of mingled admiration and anger, then turns up the winding carriage-road, leaving the victor riding slowly toward the distant village. Leaving her horse with the groom, she passed immediately to her own room, where she stood before the fire, seemingly unconscious of her wet clothes, thinking of the race; wondering who the stranger was, and if she would ever see him again. The door opened, and a lady entered. She was very tall, much above the medium height of women, and slender; her dress was of deep mourning, relieved only by a small white silk shawl, pinned closely about her throat. A complexion of unusual fairness; forehead high, with pale flaxen hair smoothed gently over it, then hiding itself in a cap of snowy whiteness, as if trying to elude the fatal touch of time, which had not yet scattered any silver



threads among the golden mass. As she stood before the young girl, from whose habit, and loosened hair, the water was dripping in streams upon the carpet, she looked much like some Catholic sister, about to pronounce penance on the guilty novice, for breaking through the seclusion of the convent, and making herself a willing victim to the storm. But all similitude to this was lost, when in a voice gentle and kind she addressed the maiden.

"Nellie dear, I am very glad you have come, it has been such a dreadful storm. How very wet you are! I am afraid it will give you your death. But where is your hat, child?"

"My hat, Aunt Amy? why, on my head, of course!" feeling where the hat wasn't.

"No it's not, my dear; you must have lost it. It is too bad, it was such a pretty little thing; but you mustn't stand another minute in those wet clothes. I will ring for Clemancy to come and dry your hair. Come to the drawing-room as soon as you can, for there is some one there who wants to see you;" and with a mysterious smile Mrs. Holmes left the room.

"Wanted to see her! Who could have come to Malbrook such a stormy night? Some of the Hasbrooks, she reckoned." Just then Clemancy the maid entered, and put a stop to her speculations, by exclaiming:

"Oh, Miss Nellie! ain't you overly glad you are to home, and ain't it been a orful storm, and don't it thunder dreadful yet? I do declare, I never did

put in such a day in all my life! I'm just that nervous I can hardly stand! Why you see, right after you're going out, in walks Mr. Hartley, after being wandering all over creation, nobody knows where, nor himself neither, I guess, for the last ten years, just like one rized from the dead, when nobody was expecting him. I do declare! I thought I should a-keeled right over, and Mrs. Holmes she was so glad and astonished like, that she just ran into one of her hysteric headaches, and he was so sorry he had surprised her so, and led her to the sofa and talked so kind like—well, I do declare! I'm beat if I ever saw such a man, anyhow; he gets around one most mighty like!" and the dressing-maid stopped, not for lack of words, but breath.

"There, Clemancy, that will do; my hair is dry enough; you can do it up, I'm right tired," and she leant back in her chair, wondering what had brought Robert Hartley home.

"Well, Miss Nellie, I should think you would be tired," and Clemancy's tongue resumed its prattle.

"You must a-rode an orful ways, for that Restless does go so like the wind, and you was gone all of five hours. I do declare, it's a great wonder you wasn't struck by the lightning, for I have always hearn tell that the faster a thing goes, the more the lightning takes after it. And my sakes, how scared your aunt was about you! She kept Cris running out into the rain to see if you wasn't coming, until the poor lad got so wet and tired, that he just sat down by the kitchen fire and said, 'Remarka-

ble!"—you know that is a great word of his, miss. But, Miss Nellie," continued the maid, going back to the subject that seemed most to interest her, "you just ort to see Mr. Hartley! He's a gentleman what is a gentleman! and if ever anybody was glad he's to home, it's Mrs. Holmes, and I'm glad, and you'll be glad too, for he's—well, he's—well, I beat if he isn't!" and the talkative maid for once lacked words to express her ideas, but not at all discouraged, she continued: "I think it must have been very gloomy like for him all the afternoon, for your aunt had to go to bed with her head."

Nellie half smiled at the thought of her aunt going to bed *without* her head, and drew a long breath at the continued clatter. Just then the door softly opened, and a little creature in a snowy night-dress, with laughing black eyes, and rosy cheeks, bounded to Nellie's side.

"Well, Miss May!" exclaimed Clemancy, in a tone of utter vexation, "if I ain't mortified to the quick! It took me one full hour to get you to bed, and here you are up again."

The little girl paid no attention to this outburst, only looking lovingly into Nellie's face and saying,

"Oh Nellie, I'm so glad you have come back! The lightning was so light, and the thunder so loud, I was afraid you'd never come, and I couldn't sleep anyhow, at all, for I thought you'd be all drowned dead in the rain," and the black eyes glistened with tears at the thought. Nellie took the rosy cheeks between her hands, and kissed the trembling little

mouth, then encircling the child with her arm, led her from the room, saying:

"But you will go to sleep now, won't you, darling, for you see I'm not drowned at all."

After she had seen May safe in bed, and started for the drawing-room, the little girl called after her,

"Oh Nellie, Uncle Robert is home, and I reckon he is right nice, only I'd like him better if he hadn't laughed when I told him I didn't think he was quite as pretty as you."

Opening the drawing-room door, and finding it quite dark, for there was no light save fire-light, she was about seeking them elsewhere, when the soft voice of her aunt, from the farther end of the apartment, called her. Following the voice, she found her aunt reclining on the sofa, and a gentleman with folded arms standing before the fire.

"Robert, this is Nellie." And the gentleman approached, and shook hands with her, saying "He was glad to see her," which she did not see how it was possible for him to be, as it was quite too dark for eyes to be of any use, and asking her if she was out long enough for the storm to overtake her. Before she had time to reply, her aunt answered for her:

"Oh yes! she was dripping wet; but then Nellie didn't mind that." Then addressing her niece—"Nellie dear, will you ring for lights? I want Robert to see you."

Nellie did as she was bid, saying something about not wanting to be looked at. As the servant en-

tered, she turned a look of childlike curiosity on the owner of Malbrook. Reader, you might have seen the description of Malbrook's lord in Nellie's face, if you could have seen it, but as you could not, you must be content without, for we do not feel equal to the task. We may only say, that he wasn't wonderful in any way, either in beauty, or ugliness, or height, or breath. He had not a lofty white forehead with wavy locks, nor angel eyes; neither had he an aquiline nose. In fact, when you looked at him, you never thought of such things as noses, for there was a fascination about the face, that made you forget such things, and you found yourself looking, and looking, and wondering all the while why you did look. It was hard to tell in what the charm lay. It might have been in the moustache, or at least a woman might have said so, for we believe all women have a failing for handsome moustaches; and it might have been in the eyes; yet they had no beauty, either of size or color; but there was a world of soul and intelligence in those eyes, and you were quite certain you had found the charm, when there would be an odd play of the handsome moustache, and you found yourself wishing you could see his mouth. As he stood bearing the scrutiny of the maiden, at first the odd play of the moustache predominated, but as he examined her girlish, upturned face, it either gave way, or was eclipsed by the admiration in his eyes. At length becoming conscious that she was not the only one using her eyes, and rendered still more conscious of the fact by having said eyes

come into collision with her own, she withdrew from the field of contest, having received no damages, excepting a pair of very hot cheeks, and was growing desperate at the silence, when he broke it by saying:

"Well?" keeping his voice up, as if expecting an answer, and she looking up again said: "Well?" in the same tone; and "Well?" chimed in Mrs. Holmes, "what do you think of each other?"

Of course that question received no answer; but Mr. Hartley looked very much as if he was of May's opinion. After handing her a chair, and asking her some questions relative to her ride, to which he received very short answers, he continued the conversation with his sister, which her entrance seemed to have interrupted. After a while he turned again to Nellie, asking "If she had not found her ride lonely."

"I did not ride alone to-day, sir," was the reply.

"Not ride alone, child? Why, who on earth did you ride with?" asked Mrs. Holmes, in astonishment.

"I don't know, Aunt Amy."

"Don't know! Why, that is dreadful; he might have been a robber!" exclaimed the good lady, in a tone of horror.

"A robber!" repeated Nellie, indignantly, at the sheer idea of her unknown victor being a highwayman. "No indeed! I never saw a more perfect horseman; and then he made *such* a bow!" continued she, earnestly.

"Quite romantic!" said Mr. Hartley. There was something in his tone, and the way he raised his eyebrows, that made Nellie's cheeks burn.


"Was he amusing himself at her expense?" She was silent, and a moment after left him to renew his conversation with his sister, and went over to the other side of the room, thinking he was very disagreeable at the least. Thinking thus she passed behind the heavy crimson drapery of the casement, and looked out upon the night.

The storm was dead, and over the heavens so lately hung with sable clouds, God, with his bountiful hand, had scattered the beautiful stars.

"Do storms die thus?"

Aye, Nellie, read the lesson well; storms do die, and die thus.

## CHAPTER II.

ALBROOK was a beautiful place. Every one said so; to be sure the house was somewhat antiquated; the stone might have been richer, and the design better, but what of it? Didn't the moss cling tenderly to it? and the trees bend lovingly over it, as though seeking to hide its defects, and show only its beauties? Then the sun always shone brighter there than anywhere else, and dropped down its rays softly, like golden dew, making the old mansion glisten like a fairy palace. Then the noble old trees cast such broad shadows on the gravel-walks, and patches of rich, velvety grass; and the flowers bloomed more gaily, and had a sweeter perfume. Everybody was proud of Malbrook; even the stage-driver, on his daily journey from village to village, never failed to cast an admiring glance upon it, and to inform his fellow on the box, "That it *was* a mighty pretty place, that Malbrook." Just as if his two eyes couldn't tell him so, without the aid of anybody's tongue. Mrs. Holmes loved the place. It had been her father's, and her father's father's, many generations back. She had left it, a bride, and now, in her widowhood, had returned, with her little girl, to its loving shelter; Nellie, too, loved it. It had been her home many years, almost as

long as she could remember, and she didn't know but what it always would be, for when her former guardian, her uncle, died, his last injunction was, that she should never be separated from her aunt, excepting by death. Nellie often wondered what she should do in case she married. She reckoned she would have to bring her husband to live at Malbrook, for she knew her aunt would never consent to leave the place; and then she would wonder whether the owner of Malbrook would have any objections to her husband living under his roof. She knew every nook and corner of the old mansion, and loved them all; had explored every particle of ground upon the place; knew all the prettiest paths through the wood, and where to find every spring and stream for miles around. But her favorite spot was about half a mile from the house, under a large old willow tree, whose long, drooping branches layed themselves in the brook that had given the place its name. It was a grand old tree; its trunk so shaped as to form the very easiest of seats; its foliage making such a grateful shade, and with the brook ever babbling tales of bygone years. Nellie spent many hours there undisturbed—for it seemed deserted by all save herself, and the birds—sometimes reading, but oftener decyphering the names and initials cut in the bark of the tree. There were many there, but only three that had any charm for her, and around those three she had woven many a romance. Two of them were unknown to her; she had never heard them mentioned; she had often been tempted to ask

her aunt to whom they belonged, but like most young girls, having a love for the mysterious, had chosen rather to remain in darkness. There was a great charm in those three names; their very position told a story in itself. There was "Madge," cut in girlish letters, and close beside it "R. H." Then a little distance above the former, as though longing to be nearer, and yet wondering at their daring in being there at all, were the initials, "P. R." "Who was Madge? did she love Mr. Hartley? and did he love her? Oh no, he was stern, and cold, and heartless! But then that other name? Ah! she knew it all now. He loved Madge; yes, he worshiped Madge; but she didn't care; she loved cold Robert Hartley, and left the noble, loving one forsaken. How could she? cruel Madge! But then, had Mr. Hartley married Madge? She had never heard that he had a wife, and she could not be dead, for she knew all the tombstones in the family burying-ground. She wished Mr. Hartley would come home. She would ask him who Madge was; and she would tell him he was cold and heartless; and how sorry she was, Madge hadn't loved the noble, suffering P. R. Yes indeed, she would. Ah! well, it was a strange world, anyhow."

But reader, I wander. I had meant to describe Malbrook, but enough.

A week had passed since the storm. Nellie sought this same old tree, and sat in its shade, her head bent upon her hand, looking intently into the brook's clear, rippling waters. Was she listening to its oft-

told tale? Ah! no; she was thinking: So Robert Hartley had been home a week, and she in all that time had never asked him who Madge was, and why not? Surely she was not afraid. But he didn't seem to like questions; he looked very stern the other night, when May persisted in asking Aunt Amy "What ever made him think of going to Europe?" but what if it did make him cold and cross? she had a right to ask him as many questions as she chose, and she wanted to know about this noble P. R., and this Madge, and she would! It was queer that Mr. Hartley didn't look as she had imagined him. To be sure he was anything but handsome, but then she had pictured him with little, steely grey eyes, and instead of that they were—why, they weren't large either—in fact she believed they were rather small, and when she came to think of it, she wasn't sure but they were grey; of one thing she *was* certain they were not steely. No indeed, they were very expressive; so full of soul, and at times so lustrous, that—that—ah! well, they were very fine eyes, and as far as they were concerned, Madge was excusable. Then, besides, his moustache was dark, heavy, and well shaped, and she *did* like a nice moustache. She wondered if he was going to stay at home altogether, now; she wished he wouldn't, still he did not trouble her in the least, and she didn't know but that on the whole it was pleasanter to have him there; it was a change. But pshaw! what was she doing? wasting a bright, sunshiny morning thinking of Robert Hartley." And spring-

ing up she left the tree, forgetting to give her customary sympathizing look at P. R. Sauntering slowly on, she entered the wood, humming snatches of songs as she went; now and then stooping to pluck some wild flower that peeped up invitingly from beneath the leaves. Of course, she had stopped wasting time, not thinking of Robert Hartley at all; doubtless she was conning a botany lesson. As the path wound deeper and deeper into the woods, she ceased her humming, and in a voice deep and rich, warbled an Irish melody, so sweet, so strangely wild and sweet, that the very birds stopped their singing to listen.

How great is the power of the human voice? what an influence it exerts not only over man, but over all created beings. As Nellie sung, the shy little squirrel forgot his fears, and paused midway in his flight up the trunk of a tree; the very sunbeams, as they struggled down through the branches, did it softly, as though fearing to break the charm. When her song was ended, for one moment all was breathlessly still, then the birds, in one grand chorus, caroled forth their thanks for their morning lesson.

On, and on, Nellie went, until she came to the wild ravine, that wound for miles through Malbrook's mountains, hills, and woods. She wandered down the mountain's steep side, and followed the narrow but rapid stream, that, rushing from its source far up among the mountains, sped with a gurgling sound through the deep hollow, and as she walked slowly on, her eyes were fixed upon the ground. What was she

thinking of? Not botany, for the flowers she had gathered had fallen unheeded from her hand! Surely she was not thinking of P. R., or Madge, or the lord of all these lands—these wild dark lands—these fair sunny lands. Aye! let her think on; we have no right to pry into her thoughts.

Suddenly she paused, her lips parted, and wonderment in her eyes. Directly before her, in an abrupt curve of the ravine, stood two figures. One of them a beautiful creature, with great sorrowful eyes raised with a pleading expression to the face of the other, a man with long, flowing cloak, and slouch hat drawn far down over his brow. An instant they stood thus; then, as if having discovered another's presence, the man raised his finger threateningly, and they were gone.

Nellie, as drawn by some secret fascination, sprang to the spot where they had stood, but there was no trace to show that they had been there, and as far as eye could reach, that dark wild ravine held no human creature but herself. Long she lingered; then, disappointed, and wondering, retraced her steps. "Was it a mental hallucination? It was too vivid for that. Even now she could see those sorrowful pleading eyes, and what was the power that strange fierce man held over that beautiful creature, and why did even she feel herself drawn toward him? Who were those two mysterious strangers, and what had brought them to that dark deep hollow where she had never before met human beings? Where had they vanished so suddenly? Could it be as the

superstitious Clemancy said, that unearthly, uncanny beings haunt that gloomy hollow? She shuddered, and quickened her slow pace into a fleet run, but when she was in the woods again she slackened her pace, and smiled at her own foolish fears and superstitions.

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That evening when the moon had risen they were all out on the veranda—Mr. Hartley and his sister on one of the oaken settees and May at her mother's feet. Nellie stood a little apart by one of the vine-wreathed pillars. Mr. Hartley was talking to his sister, telling her of the Old World, and Nellie was listening—listening though as one does to the confused murmur of voices in a dream, for uppermost in her thoughts was the ravine and its mysterious visitors. She could not banish them from her mind, and very speedily she was weaving another romance for Malbrook. Those pleading eyes had touched her with their sadness. There was a life-scene of sorrow portrayed in them, and that fierce cruel man who was tearing her heart out—she shuddered at the remembrance of him.

She wondered if they would ever come to Malbrook's ravine again. She would not let a day pass without seeking it; and yet, as she remembered her former terror and looked over the land smiling in the moonlight to where the dark woods hid the horizon, her courage failed, and her just formed resolution grew weak.

Presently a mocking-bird poured out his song



upon the evening air. Mr. Hartley ceased talking to listen, and Nellie, like all those to whom God has given one of his greatest boons, a beautiful voice, forgot everything in listening to its loveliness.

And the bird sang on, touching the hearts of its listeners with the sweetness of its song, while all the other members of nature's orchestra raised their pretty heads from their downy pillows under their wings to listen, and every little heart of all that feathered tribe fluttered with adoration. The song died. For a little all was silent, then May said softly:

"Pretty, wasn't it?"

"Very," replied Mr. Hartley, no one else answering the child. "All the birds sing pretty here, but Nellie sings prettier than all of 'em together. Don't you, Nellie?"

"Nellie sings very beautifully, Robert," said Mrs. Holmes. Might I hear this sweetest singer, this Malbrook cantatrice?" asked Mr. Hartley, glancing at Nellie. Through the moonlight she saw that slight raising of the eyebrows, and there was that same tone in the voice that had nettled her the first night he came to Malbrook. She didn't believe that he thought she could sing sweetly, and he shouldn't have an opportunity to judge: so she replied impatiently, "that she couldn't sing to-night."

"Why not, Nellie?" asked May, and

"Why not?" chimed in Mrs. Holmes.

Mr. Hartley was silent.

"Oh do, Nellie, just one song; ask her again Uncle Robert, and I am sure she will."

"I never renew a request, Puss," said he distantly. May didn't notice the tone, so taken up was she with that name Puss; it was such a pretty name, it won her little heart upon the spot, and from henceforth in her eyes Uncle Robert was perfection. But if May did not notice the tone, Nellie did; she said nothing, but a few minutes after went into the house.

"Never renew a request, indeed! she hated people that made rules, and never broke them, forcing themselves to walk by a chalked line; she hated system! But if he had a will, she would let him know that she had one too, and he should never hear her sing until he asked her; no, never!"

And she had forgotten her wonderment about the mysterious stranger, her sympathy for the creature with the great sad eyes, in her anger toward Mr. Hartley. And the victor in the race—did she never think of him? was he forgotten? Aye, no! In her imagination he was enthroned hero.



## CHAPTER III.



ALLO there, Cris! where are you going all alone with yourself?" shouted May after Cris, who was rolling an empty wheelbarrow down the carriage road.

"Down to the Lodge, Miss May," waiting until she came up.

"I reckon I'll go too; I want to see Barbara more'n bad. S'pose you wheel me down there, Cris!" looking up at him coaxingly.

"Why, Miss, the barrow ain't no ways clean, it will dirty your pretty frock."

"It ain't a frock, it is a dress! besides, I rather reckon it will wash. Do I want a ride, Cris?" Cris was not proof against coaxing, and May only had to plead, "Do, Cris!" and it was done, and she was seated in the noways clean barrow, as contentedly as if it had been a chariot.

"Barbara will be glad to see me, won't she, Cris?"

"Yes, and she's allers that, Miss May."

Cris's mother, old Barbara as they called her, lived at the Lodge; she was a prim, neat, old woman, and like the rest of mankind her nature was compounded of good and evil. She had one peculiarity,—indeed Clemancy declared "that on *one* point her head was clean cracked;" that point was the dread of taking cold. With her the coldest day

in winter, and the warmest in summer was one. She was never so contented, as when she might sit a day through by a roasting fire, and read her Bible and knit, by turns. She made great pretensions to piety, and met everything, either evil or good, with the resigned remark—"That it was all ordered." She was a great favorite with May, and scarce a day passed without the little girl seeing her.

"You never finished my kite, Cris! and you didn't make that new dress for my doll; you promised you would; why didn't you?" asked the little girl, discontentedly.

"I haven't had no time, Miss May, for with tending the flowers, and grafting the peach trees, I've been e'en a'most busy enough. But I will do it yet, you may depend upon it."

"S'pose you run a bit, Cris; it is so stupid going so slow!" Pleased to make her forget the kite and dress, Cris "took to his heels." It was a pretty, and ludicrous picture, that great uncouth fellow pitching ahead so lustily, with a broad grin on his good natured face, the little girl holding on to either side of the wheelbarrow, and bounding into the air every time the wheel turned, shouting, between her merry bursts of laughter, "Jolts, don't it?" and then, "Get up! Go it, Cris! but don't upset me."

"Don't fear, I'll do it never a bit," gasped Cris catching his breath.

On and on he bounded; Jolt, jolt, jolt, went the wheelbarrow; while little May's merry laugh leapt

pure and guileless from her child heart, and her happy voice shouted—

"Get up! Go it, Cris!"

At length they halted before the low vine-covered door of the lodge. Cris, panting and gasping, opened the door, while May, leaping from the barrow, sprang in, exclaiming:

"Oh, Barbara! I tell you I've had a bunkum ride."

"What's that, Miss May?" drawled Barbara, from her seat by the fire.

"I say I had such a grand ride in the wheelbarrow. Cris ran all the way from the house with me; but Barbara, it is meltin' hot here! Why don't you open the window?"

"'Cause it makes such a draft, dear."

"Fiddle! couldn't do such a thing," said May.

"It 'pears as if it was rather hotter like in here than usual, marm," said Cris, wiping the great drops of sweat from his face.

"Don't *you* git no sich notions in your head, you that's allers been used to a fire," said Barbara in a quicker tone than usual.

Cris looked as though he was going to say "Remarkable!" but didn't, only continuing to wipe his face, and saying no more about the heat. May was silent on the subject too, and they would both doubtless have remained in a melting state, had not Clemancy entered, leaving the door wide open behind her, and before speaking a word, flinging open the window; then seating herself at it, and fanning herself desperately with her sunbonnet, she exclaimed:

"Gracious sakes! What do you mean, Cris? You'll dissolve that child until she melts away into nothing, and kills her mother," looking reproachfully at Cris, and pointing at May.

"Clem, for marcy's sake shut that winder, or I'll take my death!" whined Barbara.

"If you do, I'll pay the funeral expenses," said Clemancy.

May laughed, and Cris ejaculated "Re-mark-able!" The old woman got up, and wrapping a shawl around her, hobbled over to the corner farthest from the window, saying:

"Well, if you will have it open, I'll get out o' the draft."

"Barbara, have you seen my Uncle Robert? I tell you he's killin' nice, ain't he, Clemancy?" said May.

"*Killin' nice!* What sort of an expression is that for a young lady to use, I'd like to know? Ain't you ever going to learn manners, Miss May?" said Clemancy.

"I don't know; I reckon some day. Have you got an uncle, Barbara?" asked the child.

"That old critter have an uncle—how ridiculous!" exclaimed Clemancy. "Why, Miss May, you haven't any more sense than a kitten."

"Why, don't old people have uncles?" persisted May.

"No, child, peoples die off when they gits old."

"But Barbara ain't dead, and she's old!" argued May.

"No, thank the Lord, I've allers tried to keep from taking cold," whined the old woman.

"If you don't take cold will you always be alive?" asked the child.

"It is ordered that everybody has got to die, Miss May."

"Why, then, what's the use in not catching cold, Barbara?"

"What's the use, child? Why, there's a deal of use!"

"It must be horrid to be dead! I hope I won't get so, very soon. Don't you think it must be orful, Clemancy?"

"Was there ever such a child for asking questions?" said Clemancy, then added: "How should I know whether it's horrid to be dead or not? I've never been it. But I guess you won't mind it if you are only a good girl, and go to Heaven."

"I hope I'll go to Heaven. Do you expect to go there when you're dead, Clemancy?"

"Remark-a-ble!" exclaimed Cris.

"Well, now, she is a wonderful questioner, ain't she?" drawled Barbara.

"She beats all at it," replied Clemancy.

"I think it's queer Barbara can't have any uncle," said May, going back to the subject that seemed uppermost in her thoughts.

"Why, I don't think there's anything queer about it only you are so little that you can't make it out."

May said no more on the subject just then, but she was evidently unsatisfied, and that afternoon she had a long discussion with Cris and Clemancy, and

then failing to arrive at any conclusion, started out in quest of Mr. Hartley. He was in the library, reading. She peeped in at the open door, timidly, a minute, then there was the patter of little feet on the carpet, and she stood at his side. He laid aside his book, and taking her on his knee, asked:

"And what does little Puss want?"

But she was perfectly quiet, looking bashfully at the carpet, and twirling her chubby little thumbs. He watched her with a quiet smile of amusement for a few minutes, then repeated his question. She raised her big, black eyes, full of inquiry, to his face then, and asked earnestly:

"Ain't you Nellie's uncle as well as mine?"

The smile hid itself behind the handsome moustache, as, with a face of perfect gravity, he asked "Why she wanted to know?"

"'Cause," said the little girl, losing her timidity in her eagerness, "I like you ever so much! Clemancy says you ain't Nellie's uncle, and Cris says he don't see as how that's so, for if you are my uncle, and Nellie and me's cousins, he don't see but that you're Nellie's uncle too, and he says if you ain't, why, it's remarkable, and I think so too, and Cris is a right smart fellow, even if Clemancy does call him uncomprehensible. I don't know what that means, but I reckon it's the same as stupid."

Mr. Hartley's gravity was imperturbable while the little girl continued:

"But you haven't told me; ain't you her uncle?"

"No, Puss," very quietly.

"No! not her uncle? Well, then, ain't you her nephew, or any of her kin?" with great earnestness.

"None in the least," with a quick, hearty laugh, that wouldn't be kept back.

"Well, if that ain't the queerest!" exclaimed the little girl, in a disappointed tone—then added, slipping from his knee—"Well, I'll go tell Cris, but Clemancy shan't hear, or she'll call him that great, ugly word, and it ain't so; Cris ain't that!" and she bounded from the room just as Nellie entered.

"Miss Nellie, Puss has just been trying to trace out some relationship between you and me, and feels sorely grieved that I am not your uncle."

Nellie looked at him questioningly.

"Have you any objections to compromising the matter, and as it is impossible for me ever to be your uncle"—with a queer smile—"might I drop that formal *miss*, so that we may not seem quite such strangers?"

Who on earth could refuse a request made with such a grace? Nellie Holmes couldn't, anyway, and when Mr. Hartley thanked her for the privilege, she looked at him, wondering if she was not a little to blame herself, last night, in being so angry.

Seeing his open book, she left him, going over and standing in the open casement.

But the twilight had stolen in since he laid his book down, so he closed it, and coming over, joined her. Nellie was looking anything but contented, and Mr. Hartley, glancing at her, said lightly:

"You do not feel very merry to-night?"

"She had had a letter from the city, and letters always made her feel blue."

"Ah! that was strange; he always thought they had the opposite effect—perhaps it was the substance of the letter?"

"No; it was from her guardian's daughter, and full of city gaieties."

"That may account for it. Perhaps contrasting Malbrook's quiet with those gaieties has given you the blues. I should think you would find Malbrook lonely."

"Why? Do you, Mr. Hartley?"

"No; but you and I are different."

"I don't see as that has anything to do with it! but we are different. I have lived at Malbrook ten years, and loved it every year, and you have forsaken it all that time, for foreign lands." She wondered that little speech had power to make him look troubled; she hadn't meant it to, but she wouldn't have her love for Malbrook questioned.

"I am glad you love Malbrook. I love it too, although I left it for so long. I see that even if you are not a relative, you are part Hartley, for it is a Hartley trait to love the homestead. You do not spend your winters here?"

"No, sir. At my guardian's in the city."

"You are fond of city life?"

"For a change. 'Variety is the spice of life,' you know."

"Do you think so?"

"Your tone says very plainly that *you* don't. I'll

tell you why, Mr. Hartley: *you* have tired variety into monotony; *I have not*, you see, and so I long to see foreign lands just as much as you once did."

"You most likely *will* see them, some day."

"Perhaps," she said doubtfully, then added—"Mr. Hartley, I wish you would tell me something pleasant, I'm so tired of everything!"

"What shall it be?" smiling at the odd request.

"Anything you choose, so long as it is something I never heard or read before. You can make it up as you go along if you like." He looked amused, and handing her a chair, began, in a low musical tone, relating a German legend, which, having found in an old German monastery he had learned both for its beauty of verse, depth of meaning, and its thrilling pathos. It was a tale of love, a spirit loved a mortal. He told it well; his voice was finely modulated, and he entered into it with his soul.

Nellie sat looking at him intently, the color coming and going in her cheeks, and wonder and sympathy in her eyes. When he had finished she was quiet for a moment, then said:

"It is very beautiful. Thank you," in a low tone.

He did not seem inclined to talk; perhaps he was touched with the sadness of the story, so they were silent until the twilight deepened, and Cris brought in the lights, then Nellie said, "What made you tell me that legend? It has made me gloomier than ever."

"I am sorry, but you wanted me to tell you something you had never heard before, and I was afraid to risk anything else."

"You must want me to think you have an exalted opinion of my learning!" sarcastically. He took no notice of the tone but said.

"I'm sorry I have added to your depression. Is there any way in which I can repair the mischief?"

She did not answer the question, but asked:

"Do you ever get out of patience with the world, Mr. Hartley?"

"Why, Nellie?"

"I thought I would like you better if you did."

"Like him better if he did what?" asked Mrs. Holmes, coming in, with May bounding at her side.

"Like me better, if I would get out of humor with the world occasionally. Would you advise me to?"

"I would, Uncle Robert," said May, not giving her mother time to reply.

"Why, Puss?" asked Mr. Hartley.

"Why, didn't you say that if you did, Nellie would like you the better for it?" asked the child, innocently.

Mr. Hartley laughed, so did Nellie, though she colored a little too; and Mrs. Holmes looked as though she didn't quite see what they were talking about.

## CHAPTER IV.



MAN is truly a creature of habit. How easily we yield to circumstances. Even troubles become so a part of our existence, that we forget we ever had anything else, and though it is natural to ever look forward to brighter days, we do it with a lifeless kind of expectancy, as if "hoping against hope."

But when those brighter days *do* come, in our joy we forget that we have ever had any sorrow, and alas! too often forget to be thankful. We are an ungrateful race; ever hoarding our misfortunes, and brooding over them, until pigmies become giants, and molehills mountains. When trials come, we wrap ourselves, as it were, in sackcloth and ashes, and bowing our heads to the dust, murmur, "Surely there can be nothing worse than this; was ever any afflicted like unto us? And when other and heavier burdens are added to our load of grief, we sigh and groan: "Surely we are at the bottom of the hill, the steep, steep hill, we have been rushing down for years;" and our prayer is, "Let us but now stand still." Stand still! Onward is earth's watchword! Up, and be a man! Turn and climb the steep ascent, and if

you fall, turn and climb again, ever keeping a good courage in your heart, and the Lord having compassion on your great desire, that is if you bear toward him a loving, grateful heart, will stretch out his all powerful, helping hand, and place you safe on the summit.

But we were speaking of man as a creature of habit, and as such readily becoming accustomed to changes.

The weeks slipped by, and Malbrook's inmates almost forgot that its lord had ever been absent—almost forgot that for ten long years he had never set foot upon the soil he called his own.

As each bright summer day glided away, May's sunny heart wound itself closer and closer about the giver of that pretty nickname Puss, and every day Nellie thought less and less of her mountain hero, less and less of her poor P. R.

Oh! what is more fickle than a maiden's heart?

Though the ravine by daylight lost all its terrors for her, she seldom visited it, and its two mysterious visitors had become, as it were, creatures of a dream.

She had almost forsaken the willow tree, but she had not forgotten Madge. She thought more and more about her every day, and each day said, "she would ask Mr. Hartley who she was on the morrow," but "to-morrow never comes."

And why didn't she ask? Surely she was not afraid! Oh no, it was not that! but somehow or other she never thought of Madge when with Mr.

Hartley; it was only when she was alone, that she fell into those wondering moods, that every one has at times, whether they have anything to wonder at or not.

One day when she had tired herself with a long train of speculations, she took up a novel, determined not to waste any more time so foolishly. Perhaps some may think the improvement a doubtful one, and consider it quite as great a waste of time to read novels, as to think idly; but we differ from them. At times, nothing is better than a good novel. We tire of the routine of daily life, we are hungry for something, we hardly know what; a first rate romance satisfies the longing.

What are novels, anyhow, but real life in print? almost every life has a romance. There is only one difference between reality and fiction. In fiction the author winds up all to suit himself, and when we close the book we say "all's well," and smile; but of reality, Fate is the author, and her cruel pen deals oftenest in tragedy.

Nellie must have been very much interested, for she did not notice that her aunt had entered the library, and was plying her inevitable needle—for she was an untiring worker—on a piece of embroidery that promised soon to be a pair of slippers. Every moment the interest of the novel gathered around her, and as she turned leaf after leaf in rapid succession, the light faded, for the sun was setting.

Mrs. Holmes, taking advantage of the dark, dropped her work into her lap, and leaning back in

her easy-chair dozed, while Nellie drew nearer and nearer to the window, chasing the light as it crept from the room, and bending her head low down to meet her book. A hand was placed between her eyes and the open page, and Mr. Hartley said:

"What are you ruining your eyes over, Nellie?" raising the book, as he spoke, close up to his eyes to read the title.

"A novel!" contemptuously.

"Well! have you any objections?"

"None, of course; but I think it is hardly worth spoiling your sight over."

"Why, I could see very well."

"You must have a wonderful vision. I can scarcely see your face."

If he could, he would have seen that she looked a little cross. He had interrupted her in one of the most exciting scenes. Just then, Cris, bringing in the lights, showed Mrs. Holmes looking very startled, as one always does when awakened suddenly, as if she couldn't quite make out her whereabouts, and did not exactly know what to make of herself.

"Why, Aunt Amy, when did you come in?" exclaimed Nellie.

"A good while ago. You were reading, and I reckon did not see me. But I hadn't any idea of going to sleep."

"You *must* have been interested!" said Mr. Hartley, with a queer look.

Nellie colored, and said, "I was."

He handed her the book, and taking one himself,



began to read. But the story had lost its interest, and lay unheeded in her lap. She was decidedly out of humor. She did not see as it was any of Mr. Hartley's affairs whether she read novels or not.

Mrs. Holmes having got fairly awake, resumed her embroidery. Mr. Hartley read on, and Nellie sat looking at the carpet, growing more out of patience every moment, that he should have disturbed her so completely, and continue reading so complacently himself. After a while, just when she wasn't expecting it, he spoke, consequently making her start as one always does when perfect silence is unexpectedly broken.

"Well, have you finished your book?" Her first impulse was to say she had, but she bit her lip and was silent, as she remembered she had not. Mr. Hartley smiled. Nellie shrugged her shoulders impatiently at his evident enjoyment of her confusion, and determining not to flatter him so much as to let him think she had stopped reading on his account, commenced framing an excuse. Mr. Hartley divined her intention, and gave her such a quizzical look, that she stopped right in the middle of her sentence, and changed her seat to one by her aunt's side, seeming very much interested in her work.

"What are you making, Aunt Amy?" said she, taking the almost completed slipper in her hand, and looking at it intently. If she had been in her usual state of mind, she would have known what it was in an instant, but Mr. Hartley had followed her, and

taken a seat on the other side of Mrs. Holmes, and she knew that he was watching her.

"Let me see it, Nellie," taking the embroidery from her hand, and spreading it on his sister's lap.

"Why, it is a slipper!" with a smile at the flushing face, that told very plainly she knew what it was *now*. Determined he should not get the better of her again, she said very innocently:

"Why, no; it is a pincushion."

"A pincushion, child?" exclaimed Mrs. Holmes, in utter astonishment. Nellie gave a little, low laugh, while Mr. Hartley said:

"I reckon you are not very well acquainted with the needle."

"No sir; I hate the very sight of one," emphatically.

"I thought all ladies liked to sew."

"Nellie don't dislike sewing as much as she pretends, Robert," said Mrs. Holmes.

"Yes, I do," persisted Nellie. "I cannot even bear to watch any one sewing, let alone do it myself."

"I like to see a lady sewing, it looks domestic," said Mr. Hartley, with the evident intention of provoking her. He seemed to like to differ from her, just for the purpose of seeing her excited.

"Domestic! Pshaw! that sounds like a man," contemptuously.

"Ah! in what way?" coolly.

"Why, it is one of their peculiarities, never to like



to see a lady holding her hands, though they may hold theirs as much as they choose."

"Every one has peculiarities. Even women are not without their faults."

"Of course not; but if the failings of the two were weighed in a balance, woman's would rise light as a feather, while man's would fall like lead," excitedly.

Mr. Hartley looked amused, and said:

"Well, then, Nellie,

'Be to their faults a little blind;  
Be to their virtues very kind.'

"Do you practice what you preach, Mr. Hartley?"

"What has put you out of humor with the men to-night, Nellie? I have often heard you wish you were a man," interrupted Mrs. Holmes.

"You wish to be such a maculate creature as man?" asked Mr. Hartley, in amusement.

"Yes sir; I should like to be a *man*; but not such *apologies* as one sees now-a-days," earnestly.

"But still you would have failings—'*Humanum est errare*,' you know."

"Yes sir; but men should say of me:

'That e'en his failings leaned to virtue's side.'

"It is a pity the world lost such a bright example as you would have been," with a touch of sarcasm in his tone. Nellie colored, while Mrs. Holmes said gently,

"There have great and good men lived, Nellie, and I doubt not do yet."

"Name one, Aunt Amy. I mean a public character."

Mrs. Holmes thought a moment, then said:

"Why, there was Abraham and David." Nellie laughed.

"You have to go to the Bible for them. But, Aunt Amy, allow me to contradict you, even there. David was anything but a good man. I think we have better living men at this day."

"David not a good man? why, my dear child!" exclaimed the good lady in consternation.

"He was a perfect Mormon, Aunt Amy, and allowed his wives to worship idols." Mrs. Holmes looked dumbfounded, while Mr. Hartley laughed at the horror in her face. "Well, then, Jacob and Job, Nellie," said Mrs. Holmes, rallying and anxious to maintain her point.

"Jacob was a partial father, and Job every one admits was a consummate grumbler."

"Well, Nellie," was all Mrs. Holmes could say, then after a moment added—

"Do you think there never *was* a great and good man?"

"I know somebody who's great and good too, mamma," said May, who had stolen in during the latter part of the conversation.

"Who may that be, Puss?" asked Mr. Hartley.

"Cris!" The answer was met with a shout of laughter, while May, looking very much displeased, said:

"Well, he *is*, any way, for he was good enough to stay in the kitchen all this hot morning, and make

my doll a new dress, and if it isn't great for a man to know how to sew, then I don't know what is."

"Very true, Puss," said Mr. Hartley, when they had stopped laughing; "that was quite a feat for Cris, for I once was acquainted with a young lady who knew so little about sewing, that, although she had very good eyes, she couldn't tell the difference between a slipper and a pincushion. Just think of it!"

"Why, mercy! but she must have been stupid!" said May, while Nellie laughed, and Mrs. Holmes said:

"Now, Robert, that is too bad!"

\* \* \* \* \*

Later in the evening, when Nellie was leaving the library, the unfinished novel attracted her attention, and struck with the thought—"Now I'll let him see that he has no influence over me," she raised it so he could see it, and said: "If you ask me to-morrow morning whether I have finished it, I will answer you."

"But the next morning he didn't ask, and Nellie was obliged to come to the very flattering conclusion, that doubtless he had forgotten it.

## CHAPTER V



R. HARTLEY had gone to the city. He had been absent about a week. They missed him at Malbrook. May was constantly telling some one how lonesome it was without him, and Clemancy was all the while saying to Cris, confidentially, "that he wasn't to tell nobody, but Malbrook was a dead beat without it's master."

Nellie missed him too, though she was constantly assuring herself she didn't. The days seemed to have more than their usual number of hours in them, and the hours more minutes. The evenings were interminable. Mrs. Holmes regularly went to sleep, leaving her to entertain herself as best she could. She fared better in the day-time, dividing her time between racing over the mountain road, hoping again to meet her unknown victor, and scouring the ravine for its mysterious visitors.

But she tired of the fruitless searches; tired of being so much alone; and when Clemancy at every opportunity would assure her that "a house wasn't more than half a house without a man in it," she would nod her head assentingly.

Occasionally she went to the old willow; but somehow, she couldn't any more spend hours building her Malbrook romance. She could not tell whose fault it was. She was half inclined to blame the brook, and accuse it either of babbling untruths to her all through the years past; or else of deceiving her now. She was obliged to confess herself puzzled; she did not know what to make of Mr. Hartley, and that P. R., nor yet that Madge, around whose name, ever since she was a little child, everything fascinating and romantic had clustered.

Ah! it was passing strange!

One day, being wearied with rambling, she came into the house, and tossing aside her hat, mentally vowed not to go out again for a week. Entering the drawing-room, where Mrs. Holmes and May were sitting, she opened the piano and seated herself at it. In a moment May was at her side, while Mrs. Holmes, from the depths of her easy-chair, called for one song after another. It was a long time since she had sung, for she had kept her secret vow well. Her clear, beautiful voice made the walls of the old mansion fairly ring, as it warbled now in light, joyous measure, now sunk into low, mournful cadence.

May stood with clasped hands, her black eyes fixed with an expression almost amounting to adoration, on Nellie's face. The servants stopped their work and stood with parted lips, and listening ear. And Cris let fall a flower he was about planting in the earth, and ejaculated:

"Re-mark-able!"

There was a step on the gravel, and in the midst of a prelude, to what May said was one of her most beautiful songs, Nellie suddenly stopped.

"Why, what is the matter with you, my dear; are you sick?" asked Mrs. Holmes, anxiously.

She replied, "No, she was tired."

"Why, Nellie, what ever is the matter with you? You have sung many a time longer than that, and not been one bit tired," said May.

The servants, roused to the realities of life, went on with their employments, and Cris, picking up the fallen flowers, again ejaculated, "Re-mark-able!" whether at the singing or the broken pot would be hard to say.

A moment after Mr. Hartley entered, and was immediately accosted by May.

"Oh, Uncle Robert! you have just come at the right time. Nellie has been singing so beautifully, and all of a sudden she stopped, and won't sing any more. You ask her, Uncle Robert. I know she will sing for you," and she took his hand, drawing him over to the piano.

"I am not so certain of that, Puss. Nellie is choice on whom she bestows her favors."

Nellie felt uncomfortable under his tone, and the color rose to her cheeks, when May exclaimed in astonishment:

"Why, Uncle Robert, you don't mean to say that she won't sing for you? Well, if that ain't the queerest!" then added, as if having made a discovery—"Then, Nellie, that is the reason you stopped

all on a sudden. But how did you ever know it was Uncle Robert's step on the veranda?"

The color deepened on Nellie's cheeks at the question, and deepened still more as she met the quizzical expression of Mr. Hartley's eyes; but determined he should not think she had taken pains to learn his step, she replied, carelessly, "That she didn't think there was anything so wonderful in it; as Mr. Hartley had been home a long time, and besides, she always knew a person's step the second time she heard it."

"Now, Nellie, you know that isn't so. For last summer when Fred and Charley Hasbrook were here, you couldn't tell their steps apart," persisted May.

"There are exceptions in every case, Puss," said Mr. Hartley, looking amused at Nellie's embarrassment.

"Well, what's the harm, anyway?" joined in Mrs. Holmes, gently, as she noticed the annoyed expression on her niece's face, "if Nellie does know Robert's step? I am sure he ought rather to take it as a compliment than otherwise."

This only made matters worse. Nellie could bear it no longer, and rising impatiently, she left the room, answering May's question as to where she was going, by saying, "To the woods." She forgot that she wasn't going out again for a week. May followed her in quest of Clemancy to hunt her hat. May's hat was always lost.

When they came out, they found Mr. Hartley on the veranda. May skipped up to him, and seizing his hand, exclaimed:

"Come on, Uncle Robert. The woods are awful pleasant in the afternoon!"

He wanted to know what sort of pleasant that was, but showed no intention of "coming on," until Nellie assured him that "The woods were very pleasant at that time." He joined them immediately then, and with such a fascinating smile, that Nellie wondered how she could have thought him so hateful a minute ago. He was very entertaining during the walk. Just before they reached the woods, he turned to May, who was skipping by his side, now *swinging her hat* to make the squirrels run up the trees, now puckering up her rosy lips to whistle back responses to the birds, and asked:

"What makes the woods so much pleasanter in the afternoon, than any other time?"

"'Cause it's so nice and shady there, when it's sunny every place else. Besides, Nellie says the birds hold their *matinée* in the afternoon. Do you know what a *matinée* is, Uncle Robert? I do," looking very wise.

He said "he hadn't the slightest idea," and asked her "to explain." May was too cute for him. She detected a hidden smile, and said, looking up saucily at him,

"Either your smile or you tells a fib, Uncle Robert. So I ain't going to tell you. Would you, Nellie?"

Just then a gaily-painted butterfly attracted her attention. She gave it chase, swinging her hat in the air, and laughing merrily, as she would almost

catch it, and it would dart from her again. Mr. Hartley turned to Nellie, about to remark on the fickleness of childhood, when, instead of finding her by his side, he saw her flying along the edge of the wood, chasing her hat, which, being very light, the wind had caught, and was tossing along before her. He stood still, curiosity and amusement blending in his face, thinking, doubtless, that it would be hard to tell who was more fickle, maiden or child.

A moment after she came back, the object of her chase swung over her arm, and a bright color in her cheeks, produced perhaps by her run, perhaps by the consciousness that Mr. Hartley had been watching her. "What would he think of her? She didn't care! It would have been very foolish to have stood still and seen her hat blow away! It would just give him something else to look queer at. Well, let him look—what of it?"

But she *did* care. For her cheeks were as red as roses, when he *did* give her one of his queer looks. He didn't say anything. She waited a moment, then asked impatiently,

"Why don't you say something?"

"What shall I say?" in an amused tone.

"Anything you choose, of course. Why don't you tell me it would have been more proper to have stood still, and let my hat blow away? Why don't you tell me to behave myself?" tartly.

"Would you obey?"

"Humph!" was her only answer.

"May I have that privilege in the future?"

"What? telling me to behave myself?"

"Yes."

"You can if you choose, and I will do likewise about minding."

Just then, May bounded up with her apron full of flowers, exclaiming, as she displayed their loveliness.

"Ain't they beautiful, Uncle Robert? You'll wait while Nellie makes me a wreath, won't you? And there is such a grand seat just a little way ahead."

She led the way, they following. Nellie took the grand seat, Mr. Hartley sitting on a fallen log opposite, watching her as she wove the flowers into a garland, blending their colors in the most perfect harmony. May stood at her side, every now and then giving joyous exclamations, as the wreath grew in size and beauty. Suddenly she threw her arms around Nellie's neck, and looking into her face, her black eyes full of love and admiration, exclaimed,

"Oh, Nellie, you're so pretty! and your sweet little mouth, it just looks as if it was made to be kissed! Don't it, Uncle Robert?"

Nellie put her hand over May's mouth, and blushed until she looked prettier than ever, while Mr. Hartley, with a look of admiration, to say the least, equal to May's, replied that "It certainly did."

"Now, Nellie, what did you stop my mouth for?" said May, wonderingly, pulling away Nellie's hand, then added innocently—

"I just said you were pretty, and—" the hand was over her mouth again, and Nellie, shaking her head at her, told her she must not say that again, or she wouldn't finish her wreath. She promised not to, but being afraid to trust her, the young girl sent her to gather some leaves from a vine, that wound itself around the trunk of a tree not far distant. A moment after she repented having done so, for Mr. Hartley was perfectly quiet. She did not dare to look at him, for she knew he was watching her.

"Would he never speak? It was very unkind to take advantage of her so."

And the beautiful little mouth began to quiver, and there were tears under the eyelids.

Mr. Hartley seemed to repent of his unkindness then, but he took a strange way of showing it, at least Nellie thought so, for gathering a handful of flowers that May had dropped in passing him, he tossed them carelessly into her face, saying:

"You foolish child! Behave yourself!"

Nellie was about to resent it, but remembering she had given him permission to make such a command, she threw the wreath which she had finished without May's leaves over her arm, arose and walked slowly on, leaving him to follow or not as he chose. He seemed to prefer the latter, for he kept his seat and watched her until May came back, then calling her, made her come and sit down again, while he helped her arrange the leaves among the flowers; then taking the wreath in his hand, he was about placing it on her head, "just to see how it looked," as he as-

sured May; but she evaded the movement; he laughed lightly, and crowned the little girl with it.

Nellie was very quiet during the rest of the walk, answering Mr. Hartley's questions in monosyllables. He talked constantly, and when they neared the house, told May, in a confidential whisper, sufficiently loud for Nellie to hear—"to ask Nellie if he mightn't go to the matinée with them again, to-morrow afternoon."

"Why don't you ask her yourself, Uncle Robert?" questioned May, in the same tone.

"Because I am afraid she will say no."

"Oh, no, she won't; will you Nellie?" asked May aloud.

Nellie laughed and shook her head.

## CHAPTER VI.



It is queer, Mr. Hartley has never been and got wedded," said Doris, the cook, in a confidential tone to Clemancy, one day when they were in the kitchen alone.

"Most likely he ain't seen any one to suit him," replied Clemancy, in a tone that said very plainly she thought Doris had no right to speculate on such a subject.

"Bedad! and he's hard to please then! for hasn't he been all over everywhere, and seen a pile of ladies, and faith he's arrived at an age of discretion when he might be able to pick one from amongst them."

"And you don't think he'd marry a furren lady? You don't think he'd do the like of that, do you?" snapped Clemancy.

"And ain't he half furren himself? ain't he lived abroad a long spell, and don't he talk all sorts of tongues?"

"A furren granny!" contemptuously. "Do you think because a gentleman can talk something else besides plain English, he is got to be furren?"

"Don't stick up your nose, Miss Clem, it's inclined that way a bit anyhow"—Clemancy's nose was slightly pug. "But as for him bringing a French woman, or some such, to be mistress to us, I shouldn't like it no better nor you; and I think if he'd use his eyes, he'd find somebody to suit him without going very far."

"And pray who may that be?" asked Clemancy, her eyes flashing indignantly at the hint about the shape of her nose.

"Sure it's dull you are, not to see that it is our own pretty young lady."

"And is it the like of *you* that's to be gossiping about Miss Nellie?" said Clemancy, jumping at the opportunity of repaying the insult to her offending member by disparaging Doris's situation.

"The like of me! I'd like to know if I ain't quite as genteel as you, for all your fine airs! I don't see but what it's quite as respectable to cook for folks, as to be eternally waiting on them."

"There, keep your temper, Doris," said Clemancy, having had her revenge, and growing cool as the cook became excited.

"Yes; I *will* keep my temper, and bedad I'll say what I choose, too! And I'll say it's queer Mr. Hartley don't take a fancy to Miss Nellie, until I'm grey, if I feel like it."

"Hush! hush! don't let Betsy hear you. She's such a blabber!" said Clemancy, in a whisper, as the chambermaid entered.

"What are you whispering about?" asked Betsy,

suspiciously. Just then a bell rung, and Clemancy ran to answer it, Doris calling after her,

"There, Miss Clem. I'd be pleased to know which is best; cook or waitress?"

About an hour after the bell had rung, Clemancy knocked at Nellie's door, and on her summons to "come in," entered, saying,

"I came to see if you wanted any help gitting ready for dinner, miss?"

Nellie said she did not; but Clemancy evidently had no intention of leaving yet, for she began busying herself about the room, putting it to rights. Nellie was arranging her hair, and apparently intent upon it, as she paid no attention to the maid. She knew Clemancy like a book, and therefore knew she had come in for a talk, and to tell her something wonderful, as was her custom. She rather enjoyed the little manœuvres the girl went through, to make her talk come in easy, and have an unpremeditated air. But Clemancy was rather longer than usual finding an opportunity to bring in the conversation. She had set the room almost in order; Nellie's hair was arranged, and in a few minutes she should leave the room. Clemancy began to look uneasy, and puzzled. At length, to her evident relief, she came across a dainty white apron, all trimmed with lace, and with wee bits of pockets, that Nellie had just taken off. A gleam of satisfaction spread over her face, and holding it up, so as to attract Nellie's attention said:

"Mr. Hartley beats all now, doesn't he, Miss Nellie?"

Nellie looked as if she couldn't possibly see what connection her apron had with Mr. Hartley's "beating all," but asked, "Why, Clemancy?"

"Why, he has such a wonderful way of doing just what he likes, and making people do so too—whether they want to or not. You see, just a spell ago, your aunt told me to put an apron on to Miss May, 'cause she was burning her arms and neck in the sun. Well, you know Miss May is very contrary, and has got a will of her own like, and never likes to wear aprons, nowadays. I believe children never does, if you have taken notice!"

Nellie nodded assent, and the girl kept on.

"Well, she wouldn't have her apron on; and when I told her she would get as black as a nigger, she said she didn't care if she did. I coaxed, and coaxed, but it didn't do no good. So I got mad, like, and said she *must*; and she got mad too, and said she *wouldn't*; and at last I couldn't be wasting any more time, so I just took hold on her and tried to put it on by force, and that got up her temper so that she kicked and screamed like ginger! While she was doing it, up comes Mr. Hartley, and opens his eyes, like I s'pose you have seen him do, and asks 'What's the matter?' and then I tells him, while Miss May keeps on crying; and then he says, 'Puss, let Clemancy put your apron on!' and—if it don't beat all—she lets me do it right on the spot, and the next moment goes off holding onto his hand



as smiling and pretty as if she hadn't been bawling at the top of her voice just a minute before. It is queer, now, ain't it?"

Nellie said "Very," then, as the dinner-bell rung, started for the dining-room, thinking that even if he did make every one else do just as he chose, he shouldn't make her.

That evening, after dinner, Nellie left Mr. Hartley and his sister in the library, and went out on the veranda. The day had been a showery one, and now the air was full of dampness, and had that chill in it, that always follows a rainy day. She had been there some little time, when Mrs. Holmes called in an uneasy tone,

"Nellie, hadn't you better come in? I'm afraid you will take cold."

She said she wasn't the least chilly, and made no motion to comply with her aunt's request. Mrs. Holmes said nothing more, but went on talking with her brother. After a little, Mr. Hartley came out, and standing by Nellie, said:

"The air is very damp. Hadn't you better come into the house?"

She said "No; that she had not been so comfortable before all day, and preferred remaining where she was."

"You won't come in, then?" questioningly.

"No sir, I *won't*," half petulantly.


"As long as *you won't, I think you will*," drawing her hand within his arm, and looking at her in his queer, half winning, half determined way. The

girl's will yielded on the spot, and she was scarce conscious that it had yielded, so gracefully had the conquest been made.

Ay! Nellie Holmes, are you the same girl that scarce an hour ago almost vowed "that Mr. Hartley shouldn't make you do as he wanted, even if he did every one else?" Take care how you make resolutions in the future. Foolish Nellie Holmes!

Never before had Mr. Hartley been so entertaining as on that evening. He had traveled, as Doris had said, "all over everywhere." His descriptive powers were very fine, and his fund of anecdotes inexhaustible. More than once that evening, Nellie found herself framing excuses for Madge, that unknown, mysterious Madge! She had long since ceased sighing for "poor P. R.," and had almost given up dreaming her Malbrook romance. So different was Mr. Hartley from what she had imagined him, that she was completely puzzled, and did nothing now but wonder *who* Madge was, and *where* she was. And still, as the days slipped by, her wonderings were unsatisfied.

## CHAPTER VII.

HE heat was intense; the sun did not shine out round and full, but was enveloped in a haze; and there was that damp sultriness in the air that oppresses the gayest. The heated light penetrated even the thick foliage of the woods. They were very silent; not a leaf stirred; the birds were mute, and hopped wearily from branch to branch, with drooping wing. Nellie sat on a fallen log, with an unopened book at her feet. It had fallen and she lacked the energy to pick it up. Nature was fainting, dying for a draught of water, for a breath of air. As the hours toiled on, more feebly beat the pulse of life, stiller grew the woods, and more wearily hopped the birds.

But God will not let the world perish, and reach forth no helping hand. A slight breeze rustled in the leaves, far up in the upmost boughs of the trees. It increased in strength, tossing first leaf, then twig, then branch. Clouds springing up from the west enveloped the sultry sky, and God, opening the valve of his great reservoir, let flow the life-giving rain. Earth drank the refreshing draught, and revived; the birds, all seized with new life, shook the

drops from their pretty wings, and carolled most gleefully and thankfully. Nellie, springing up, forgetting her book, forgetting everything in her renewed energies, bounded from the woods with light and elastic step homeward. She avoided the shelter of a grove that lay directly in her path, going around it, and stood by the side of the little brook, that now widening, now narrowing so that one might leap it, and ever sparkling and bright, wound through Malbrook's woods, fields, and groves. She stepped upon the log that formed its bridge, but the cool, clear water beneath, receiving its fresh supply from heaven, looked so inviting that she paused, and plucking a leaf from the low, drooping branch of an oak that stretched lovingly over the little brook, twisted it into a cup, and leaning over dipped it into the stream; then tossing it in the air and draining its crystal contents, exclaimed:

"*This* to the summer rain!" then again filling the leafy goblet and raising it to her lips, added,

"And this to my future lord!"

"And this to his lady!" said a voice under the oak, and there with a similar cup raised to his lips, and merriment in his eyes, stood the owner of Malbrook.

The rain drops frolicked gaily among the blushes and dimples in Nellie's cheeks, as she refilled the rustic goblet, and quaffing the sparkling water, added,

"And this to Malbrook's lord, and *his* future lady."

He thanked her, and stepping upon the log, stood by her side, saying,

"Really, Miss Nellie, you frighten me."

"Why, do I look so absolutely dreadful?" casting a rueful glance at her wet clothes. His eyes answered the latter part of the question in such a way as to make Nellie's cheeks as rosy as a peach that the sun has just kissed, while he said:

"Why do you frighten me? Why, because you look so much like the geni of the place, or a water-nymph, that I am in constant terror of being transformed." Then added seriously—"Do you know you will take cold in those wet clothes?"

"No sir; I don't know it. Anyway, I'm not going home yet," smiling.

"But what if I say you are?"

"Well, I'm not!" defiantly.

Foolish child! She forgot how she had kept very much such a resolution once before. He paid no attention to her opposition, but led her off as quietly as possible. She was silent a minute, then looked up with a perplexed face, and said:

"Really, Mr. Hartley, I believe it is as Clemancy says. You make every one do just as you choose. I didn't mean to come off of that bridge, any more than anything in the world."

\* \* \* \* \*

"Oh! I tell you, Uncle Robert, I know something; and Cris is a right smart fellow!" exclaimed May, emphatically, bounding into the library late in the afternoon of this same rainy day

"What makes you think so, Puss?" asked Mr. Hartley, smiling at her earnestness.

"Because he taught me some kind of a something—this is one of them—now you guess it, Uncle Robert, and you too, mamma and Nellie: 'When is a nose not a nose?' " and the little girl stood clapping her hands, her black eyes sparkling joyously, because, as she said, "She knew something, at last, that Uncle Robert didn't."

Mr. Hartley soberly declared that "It would be impossible for him to guess," and the little creature, giving two or three congratulatory leaps, exclaimed amid her merry bursts of laughter,

"When it is a little radish (reddish.')

They all joined in the laugh then, whether at the answer, or out of sympathy, it would be hard to tell.

"I know another one, too," and there was mischief lurking in the black eyes now. "Why is a lame king like a duck?" but she didn't give them much chance for guessing this time. Exclaiming, "Do you know? Do you know?"

Mr. Hartley replied that "He certainly did not."

"Well, neither no more do I," said she, looking up saucily. He caught the little rogue, and punished her impudence with a kiss, at which she pretended to be highly offended, though she was not at all, for she afterwards told Clemancy that "Uncle Robert's kisses were *rare* things." Indeed, even her show of displeasure was of short duration, for in a few minutes she was seated on a stool at his feet, and looking up into his face, saying in her earnest, childish way.

"Are there many pretty ladies in Europe, Uncle Robert?"

"There are pretty ladies everywhere, Puss."

"Yes, I know; but are there *very* pretty ones there?"

"Yes; very pretty," smiling.

"Wasn't you sorry to come away and leave them?"

"Very. How would you have liked me to have brought one with me?" lightly.

"I don't know. I rather reckon I'd 'a liked it, if mamma and Nellie would. But why didn't you, Uncle Robert?"

"They did not quite suit!" amused at her persistence.

"Why, weren't they pretty enough?"

"Yes; but *pretty* isn't enough."

"Not enough! Why, what else must she be?" with childlike curiosity.

"What else? why

'She must be lovely, and constant, and kind,  
Holy, and pure, and humble of mind;  
Blithe of cheer, and gentle of mood,  
Courteous, and generous, and noble of blood.'

When he began he was speaking to May, but before he had finished, he was looking into Nellie's earnest eyes.

"I hope you will find her, Mr. Hartley," incredulously.

"Thank you. I expect to," gravely.

"Don't you think he will, Nellie?" asked May. "I do! I'm sure there are plenty of pretty ladies in the world, but then there ain't so many pretty men. Oh, Uncle Robert! I tell you Nellie and me is going to have beautiful men. And they are going to have great silver and glass palaces all full of gold furniture; and great dogs, and cunning little kittens, and they are to have golden curls all hanging down on their shoulders, and to be dressed in scarlet and blue, like the princes in the fairy tales. Ain't they, Nellie?"

Mr. Hartley waited for Nellie's answer, half smiling, half earnest, but she was not conscious of it. So intent was she on what May had been saying. She did not reply at once, perhaps she was in Fairyland; but after a moment, with a half sigh, said:

"Ah! May, princes will do very well for fairy tales, but real life is another thing." Then added, half gaily:

"What though on humble fare we dine,  
Wear hoddens grey and a' that?  
Give fools their silk, and knaves their wine,  
A man's a man for a' that."

A look of pleasure flashed over Mr. Hartley's face. And so the three, man, maiden, and child, unconsciously to themselves, had, each in his own way, described his ideal.

"Wear grey, Nellie! and not any scarlet at all? and shan't they have the golden curls? Oh Nellie!" exclaimed May, disappointedly.

"Why, Puss," joined in Mrs. Holmes—"men

wouldn't look well with yellow curls. Just imagine how Uncle Robert would look.'

"But Uncle Robert ain't a prince," said May, while Nellie bit her lips to keep back a laugh, and Mr. Hartley glancing into an opposite mirror, raised his eye-brows as though speculating on his appearance with yellow curls.

"But mamma," persisted May—"grey is the ugliest color there is. I'm sure Uncle Robert wouldn't look any better in it than with curls." Nellie gave up biting her lips and laughed, while Mrs. Holmes looked at her brother and said slowly:

"Why, no—I don't know as he would," his gravity was imperturbable.

"I'm sure he wouldn't," said May, decidedly.

"And so my man shall wear scarlet, even if he don't have the curls," with a half sigh at the sacrifice of the yellow ringlets.

"It seems to me you are rather young to be speculating on your man," with an odd smile at the interested little face.

"Why, I'm not so orful young, Uncle Robert; when you were as little as me, didn't you ever hear fairy tales, and think of such things?"

"What things? men with yellow curls? hardly." with a queer look.

"Now, Uncle Robert, you know I didn't mean that!" said May, in a provoked tone.

"Well, what *did* you mean?"

"I don't think that I will tell you, for you will only laugh at me again."

"Why, I have not even smiled."

"But Nellie has," said the little girl, in an offended tone.

"Well, she shan't again. See that you behave yourself, Nellie."

"I ain't going to tell you anyway, for I'm not sure but you are laughing now; you look like it." She looked up into his face a minute, then clasped her chubby little hands on his knee, and laying one rosy cheek on them, said softly, wonderingly:

"Uncle Robert, I wish you wouldn't look at me so, you make me like you *so much*, just when I don't want to."

Mrs. Holmes smiled at the words, while Nellie bent her head upon her hands and sighed softly to herself that—"It wasn't such a *great* wonder about Madge, after all."

## CHAPTER VIII.



ELLIE had just left Barbara's cottage, and had turned her face homeward, walking very slowly, her eyes bent upon the ground. She looked anything but pleased. Mr. Hartley joined her.

"Which way, Nellie?"

"I don't know, nor care much," indifferently.

"What is the matter?"

"Nothing. What should be?" impatiently.

"I'm sure I cannot say. I thought you did not look very pleasant about something."

"Humph!" displeased at the doubtful compliment.

"Where have you been?"

"At Barbara's," shortly.

"Where's that?"

"You don't know where Barbara's is?" in astonishment, then, as if recollecting herself. "Why, of course you don't, how should you?"

"You haven't told me yet."

"Why, she is Cris's mother. It seems so odd that you don't know anything about her. Why, I can remember her ever since I can remember anything.

She used to be my nurse, but I never would endure her."

"Ah! why not?" with an amused look at her peculiar manner of answering, or rather not answering his question.

"I don't know, without it is she is so dreadfully pious, as she calls it. Why, Mr. Hartley, do you know that she thinks that everything that ever was, was ordered? Just a minute ago, I picked up her cat. I don't know what on earth made me do it, for I hate cats, and see what it did," holding up her hand, which bore the mark of puss's claw.

"And when I threw it down, Barbara had to go and tell me it was cruel to treat the cat so, that the thing was ordered—just as if before the world was made, among the other things noted down to be done, I was to have a cat scratch."

There was a very suspicious movement of Mr. Hartley's moustache. Nellie saw it, and gave her shoulder an offended little shrug, thinking, "he don't care one bit; he hasn't any more heart than a stone." The scratch smarted just enough to make her cross.

"Let me see," holding out his hand gravely for hers.

She put it partly behind her, saying crossly—

"I shan't do any such a thing. You don't care one bit."

She did not look at him; she was afraid to, for she felt that he was raising his eye-brows; moreover, it suddenly came into her head how foolish it was to

vent the spite she felt toward the cat, on him, and she set her lips together in a way that said as plainly as words could have:

"I'll not speak another word."

He seemed inclined to let her take her own course, and for a little while they walked on in silence. At length Mr. Hartley broke the quiet, "You did not tell me where Barbara lived; you only told me whose mother she was," very gravely.

"She lives at the Lodge," shortly.

"Ah!" and again there was a silence. After a little, "Did you spend the morning with her?"

"Yes, sir."

"That accounts for me not finding you."

"Did you look for me?" in a very different tone from that in which she had made her previous remarks.

"I searched the woods through."

"Did you?" decidedly pleased.

"Yes, and all the thanks I received was a scolding that puss deserved much more than I."

Nellie colored; she was getting to be very much ashamed.

"Well?" said he, as if waiting an answer to his last remark.

"What?" asked Nellie, not understanding him.

"Are you not going to tell me you are sorry?"

She turned away her head, and did not answer; the next time he spoke it was on quite a different subject.

"You never go to the ravine, I believe."

"Why, yes I do. What made you think I did not?"

"I never met you there. It has always been a favorite spot of mine, especially when I was a boy, it was so wild and romantic, with its sudden bends and curves, its winding stream, and the woods frowning down on it from either side. I used to imagine the stream was the Nile, and have followed it for miles, seeking its source, when I knew all the while it arose in exactly the other direction among the mountains. My favorite pastime was imagining myself some gallant knight of ancient day, seeking the rescue of lady fair. Then the lonely ravine became another valley of St. John, and I, with my child gun over my shoulder, a Sir Roland De Voe in miniature, seeking the spectral castle, with its beautiful sleeping inmate.

"Why, Mr. Hartley, I didn't know boys ever built castles in the air. I thought that was a failing entirely confined to girls," said Nellie, wonderingly.

"And *you* anyway," added she, looking at him curiously.

"Why not *me*? do I look so decidedly matter of fact?" questioned he, raising his eye-brows.

"Why no, but"—and there she stopped; she was thinking how different she had imagined him in her Malbrook romance.

"But what?" asked he. She did not tell him; she could not very well, as she had no notion of letting

him know she had ever thought of him before he came to Malbrook.

"You build castles," said he, finding she had no intention of answering him.

"How do you know I do?"

"I knew it the first time I ever saw you."

"Humph! I don't see how!" impatiently.

"When you told me of your race through the mountain road, I knew full well that the unknown victor was enthroned in your castle as hero."

"I don't see how you can tell," said Nellie, half crossly.

"Why, didn't I know that the road was a wild, romantic one, and the thunder played almost as gleefully with its echo there among the mountains, as it does around Italy's seven hilled lake? Wasn't it the grandest of places for a girl to meet her hero? Of course I knew it," with the quiet humor in his tone that always provoked her. She would have denied the whole thing if she had dared, but she knew its truthfulness too well.

"He isn't my hero any more; I had almost forgotten he ever had been," said she, trying to excuse herself. She had made a mistake in the plan, however.

"May I ask who is your hero, now?" looking at her quizzically. He was the only gentleman she had met since that night, and had evidently put a flattering interpretation to her words. She colored crimson, and answered dryly: "Nobody."

He gave her an amused, incredulous look, that

made her cheeks grow hotter still; and with a petulant shrug of the shoulders, began increasing her pace. He quickened his also, keeping up to her for a few steps; then taking her by surprise, drew her hand within his arm, saying—

"Now you shall walk slower; I haven't any notion of going it on the double quick with the thermometer at ninety."

She looked at him in wonder a second, then was going to draw away her hand, but he gave her a look that said very plainly—"You are afraid to leave your hand here, lest I shall think you like me; what a foolish child!"—so whispering to herself, "I'll show him I don't," she let it be.

"If in that race your victor had been loser, what place would you have assigned him in your castle, Nellie? Not hero?"

The young girl was silent a moment, then said, as if thinking aloud—

"He was a superb horseman."

"Yes, so you have said before," said Mr. Hartley, with perfect gravity.

"But would you have called him hero if he had lost?"

"And I never saw such a bow as he made," continued Nellie, meditatively.

There was a queer look in Mr. Hartley's eyes.

"A perfect bow doesn't make a hero; a pigmy may learn to lift his hat with grace; but throwing his bow and horsemanship together, would you have thought him a hero if he had lost?"



"No, I don't think I should. I should have felt my superiority if I had won, and an inferior could never be a hero."

"But if he was your superior in everything excepting horsemanship, would you deprive him of that honor just for *one* failing?"

"Certainly. I would exceed him in one thing, and that would be just *one too much*; he must, at least, be my *equal* in everything."

Mr. Hartley smiled gravely. Nellie looked at him curiously, then said:

"I reckon you must have had a glorious time building castles all the while you were away."

"Ah! Why?"

"Why, were you not in Spain, and Greece, and Italy? Oh! I should think Italy would be a glorious place for castle building."

"Why any more glorious than any other place?" with marked emphasis on her strong modifier.

"Oh! its beautiful skies, and its grand old ruins, and its lovely daughters. I think I should stop castle building, might I visit Italy," with a longing sigh.

"You would find yourself, even while there, dreaming other, and more golden dreams, we

"Are ever looking for the *never seen*."

"Were you disappointed in Italy, Mr. Hartley?"

"Oh, no! but there is always a longing in the human heart, a yearning for an undefined something; I doubt if any one was ever satisfied, Nellie," he said it half sadly.

"Do you think so, Mr. Hartley? Do you think it could *never* be satisfied? I should be utterly miserable if I thought *my* longing never would be," dejectedly.

"Perhaps it will be, Nellie, when you find your hero," said he, looking at her kindly. Her color rose; she gave her head a little toss, and said, incredulously—

"When?"

## CHAPTER IX.



ELL, Clem, I shouldn't so much wonder if Mr. Hartley would be after gitting married some of these fine days," drawled Barbara.

"And who has been putting the like of that into your head?" snapped Clemancy.

"And is it such a great thing that it would have to be put in? It's quite nat'ral like I should feel an interest in the baby I nursed all through its teething and colicking," said Barbara, in a quicker tone than she was wont to use.

"And was it you that nursed Mr. Hartley through the like of all that? I never heard you tell of that afore," said Clemancy, feigning astonishment, and pretending not to know what Barbara meant.

"Sure, you're not so stupid as to think I meant that! you know, as well as me, it was Miss Nellie I was talking about."

"Oh! you was speaking of Miss Nellie getting married. I misunderstood you to say Mr. Hartley."

"Now, Clem, it is no use to be putting on the innocent to me. You knew well enough I meant Mr. Hartley and Miss Nellie."

"Well, what about 'em?" snapped Clemancy.

"Why, it's thim will be getting married some o' these days."

"I shouldn't be surprised if they did, but it's no sign they'll be gitting married together; and it's a leetle too much for Mr. Hartley's servants to pick out a wife for him; and for Miss Nellie's old nurse, an aged critter like you, to choose out her husband!" said Clemancy, indignantly.

"And don't you think they are suited to one another? And don't you think they'll make an excellent fine pair?" asked Barbara.

"I don't think it's the like of me to be passing an opinion on the like of *them*," reproachfully.

"Well, perhaps it's not the like o' *you*, but I nussed Miss Nellie through all her teething, and I may say what I like," replied the old woman, consequentially.

Clemancy scowled.

"I've been thinking considerable about it lately, and I've come to the conclusion that it's all ordered, Clem," drawled the old woman.

"Why, that's wonderful! to think of a thing being ordered," said Clemancy, satirically.

"Yes, Clem," continued Barbara, paying no attention to her last remark. "I've come to the conclusion it is ordered."

"So you said afore," snapped Clemancy.

"Well, you see how it is. The Lord would never have let her come here, if He hadn't intended her to stay.

"That's queer arguing. Judy, if it ain't! Then I suppose I'm never to leave here; and if Miss Nellie should give me my walking ticket to-day, I

wouldn't leave, but would stick on all the same, 'cause the Lord brought me here."

"You're not the like of Miss Nellie," said Barbara, drawing closer to the fire. Clemancy's eyes flashed at the reproof.

"No, and it's not me that makes any pretensions to be," said she, indignantly.

"It sounded mightily like it," drawled the old creature in ill humor, and hitching her chair still closer to the fire, as if to keep up an equal proportion of heat, between her temper and body.

"If you ain't a bit careful, you'll blaze up, and then I suppose that will be ordered too," in a very sarcastic tone.

"I suppose it would," said the old woman, resignedly. But preventing the *order* meanwhile, by drawing back the least bit.

"Gracious Peter! afore I'd be so killin' pious!" said Clemancy, crossly.

"It would be better for your eternal salvation, if you were a *leetle* more pious," said the old woman, meekly.

"Well, no need for a sarmon. I'll excuse you from that this morning, and just be good enough to tell me who has been putting such notions as you have been talking about, into your old head?"

"And didn't I tell you it didn't require anybody to be putting 'em in?"

"That's not answering my question. You know well enough that Doris or Betsy have been here with their long tongues."

"And isn't this the place she should come? I think Doris would be but a poor friend if she didn't come to the nurse of the young lady, to talk of her."

"So it was Doris, was it? I thought as much," said Clemancy, shaking her head significantly.

"You did, hey? Why didn't you say so afore, then?" asked Barbara. Just then Doris came in.

"Humph! I guess I'll go. You might be after enjoying your conversation better alone," said Clemancy, looking daggers at the new comer.

"You needn't hurry. We'll be glad of your company," said the cook, affably.

Clemancy deigned no reply to the invitation, but flirted out of the room, calling back sarcastically:

"Better come and shut the door, Doris; that old critter might git cold; besides, you are *used* to the fire."

When she reached home, she started in search of Cris; and when she had found him, poured out a perfect shower of invective against servants that did not know their place, but must needs be gossiping about people above them, while poor Cris looked at her with staring eyes, and gaping mouth, thinking it was all intended for him; and imagining that *some-time*, when he didn't know anything about it, he had said *something* dreadful about *somebody*.

In the midst of the hurricane, Nellie came in, and looking from one to the other with a merry twinkle in her eye, for she was accustomed to Clemancy's storms, asked,

"Well, Clemancy, what are you scolding Cris for now?"

Cris wriggled his legs as if his pantaloons were too tight, and twirled his thumbs, looking guiltily at the floor. Clemancy was silent.

"What have you been doing, Cris?" persisted Nellie.

Cris grew the color of a beet, counted his eight fingers and two thumbs in awkward confusion, then said:

"Clem said, I said *something* about *somebody*, what I don't remember I said."

"Well, did ever any one hear the like of that! Why, Miss Nellie, he's as green as a new union. I never said a blessed word about *his* saying anything about anybody. It was somebody else; why, bless my soul! Cris is as innocent as a kid!" exclaimed Clemancy.

"And it wasn't *me* that you meant, Clem? Remark-a-ble!" said Cris, infinitely relieved, and falling to counting his fingers and thumbs again.

"Who was it, Clemancy, and what were they saying about who?" asked Nellie, with true woman curiosity.

Clemancy didn't answer. She looked puzzled. They were in the dining-room; the door stood on a crack, leading into the sitting-room, where Mrs. Holmes was lying on the sofa dozing, and Mr. Hartley sitting at a table trying to read; but the confab in the dining-room rather disturbed him.

"Why don't you tell me, Clemancy?"

"It is nothing, miss; only something Barbara said."

"Barbara? and what has she been saying?" asked Nellie, crossly. Barbara was no favorite of hers.

"Why, she didn't say so much; only I just got mad at her," said Clemancy, trying to get out of the scrape, but only getting the further in, by adding to Nellie's curiosity.

"I don't see what you got mad at her for," said Nellie, pettishly; then turning to Cris—"Do you know?"

"Gracious no! he is as innocent as a kid, as I said afore," answered Clemancy, for him.

"I shall go and ask Barbara what she said, if you won't tell me," persisted Nellie.

Clemancy's face grew perplexed. She knew that Nellie could easily get it all out of Barbara, and that the old woman would make her think *she* had been gossiping about her too. So she concluded she would tell a fib that would satisfy her, so that she would never think of it again.

"Well, are you going to tell me?" asked Nellie.

"Why yes; it ain't so much that I can't tell it. She said a"—and the girl came to a dead pause. All her ingenuity at fib-making deserted her, and she could think of nothing but the truth.

"Well, was it anything about me?" curiously.

"Oh, mercy, no!" in a tone that directly contradicted the words.

"Wasn't it, really?" persisted Nellie.

"Judy, no!" repeated the girl, with more confidence.

"Who was it then? Aunt Amy?"

"Never a bit," earnestly.

"Was it about May?" she was evidently bound on knowing.

"Gracious Peter! and what could the old critter have to say about such a youngster as that?"

"Mr. Hartley?"

"Mercy, no!" with the voice belying the words again.

"Yes, it was; your voice says so. What did Barbara say about Mr. Hartley, Clemancy?" with all her curiosity on tip-toe.

"Why, I said, she said never a bit."

"You said you would tell me, and you ain't doing it," said Nellie, half crossly, then added, "wasn't it about anybody I know?"

"Sakes, no!" replied the girl, going on the system of denying everything.

"I don't believe you, Clemancy. I know it was about me. Did she tell you I shut up all the drafts when she wasn't looking, and put her fire out, the last time I was there?"

"Did you do the like of that, now?" exclaimed Clemancy, gleefully, while Cris rolled his eyes, and muttered admiringly,

"Re-mark-a-ble!"

"Well, what *did* she tell you?"

"Why, a"—— began the girl, and stopped.

"Pshaw! Clemancy, you are not usually so slow

to talk," said Nellie, impatiently. The rebuke was too much for Clemancy; it loosed her tongue, and she said quickly:

"She just said it was ordered."

"What was!"

"Why, that you would be gitting married some o' these days," making a clean breast of it.

Nellie's cheeks flushed a little.

"It appears to me Barbara is growing very wise," said she, shortly; then added, curiously, "Who"— Just then May came to coax Clemancy to come and give her a swing. The girl, glad to escape further quizzing, went with her; but she could not so easily get rid of her questions. Nellie followed her. A little after, she came back and went into the sitting-room. Mrs. Holmes was still asleep, Mr. Hartley reading. Nellie's cheeks flushed.

"How long had he been there? Had he heard her questioning Clemancy? She would find out."

She went over and stood opposite him. He paid no attention to her.

"Mr. Hartley!" in a low tone, so as not to disturb her aunt. He closed his book, leaned back in his chair, and looked at her from under his hand. She was silent, not knowing how to put the question. She did not dare come right out and ask him how long he had been there. He waited a moment, then said,

"Well?"

"Have you been out this morning?" going around

the bush. The handsome moustache moved suspiciously.

"Yes, before breakfast." Her cheeks burnt.

"What have you been doing since?"

"Trying to read," very gravely.

"What hindered you?"

"Talking in the dining-room disturbed me," looking at her quizzically.

He had heard every word, and it had disturbed him. "She wouldn't annoy him any longer," so saying haughtily, "I will not prevent you reading any longer," she turned to leave the room. He let her get nearly to the door, then spoke her name. She paid no attention. He called her again, in a louder tone. She turned, placing her finger on her lip and pointing to her aunt, who was still asleep.

"Come here a moment," said he, in a loud whisper. She shook her head, but stood still. "I want to speak to you." She went toward him, impelled by curiosity.

"Closer; I am afraid of waking Amy; see, she is moving.

Nellie glanced over to where Mrs. Holmes was stirring in her sleep. She stood beside his chair.

"Bend your head."

"I can hear you here," doubting lest he was not as fearful of waking his sister as he pretended, and was only teasing her. He leaned back in his chair, and giving her a quizzical look, said:

"Who did Barbara say was going to be your husband?"

She crimsoned to her very temples, turned her back deliberately to him, and left the room. He laughed lightly.

## CHAPTER X.



BRIGHT beautiful summer morning, all full of glad air, and sunshine, and songs of birds, just the kind of a day to coax one out to the side of a brook with a fishing line, or a book. Mr. Hartley entered the dining-room by one door, with the former of the two in his hand, just as Nellie was leaving it by another.

"Wait a moment, Nellie. Where are you going?"

"To the kitchen," with an air of importance.

"To the kitchen! and pray what for?"

"To make gingerbread," grandly.

"You make gingerbread," incredulously.

"Yes sir, I make gingerbread. Don't you think I can do it?"

"Oh! undoubtedly," in a tone that didn't mean the words *one bit*.

"You don't think I can do it, even if you do say you do, but I can, any way. I have done it, whenever I wanted to, ever since I was ten years old," in a tone more worthy of that age than her present. There was an odd smile in his eye; she saw it, her cheeks flushed, and she exclaimed:

"You shall not have one bit of my cake, see if you shall," and half saucily, half angrily, she

left the room, slamming the door after her. There was a smile on Mr. Hartley's face that seemed to say: "We'll see about that;" and discarding his fishing-line, with the appearance of one who has changed his mind, he went into the library and sat down by the open window. Whole crowds of coaxing sunbeams crept in through the lattice, trying to win him back to his former intention; and the breezes gathered the perfume of all the sweetest flowers around, and fanned his brow, whispering the while of cool shaded brooks, and little dancing, tormenting fishes. But all their temptations failed; he was evidently thinking of something else than breezes or sunshine, or even brooks just full of pretty fishes. Two or three times he glanced at his watch, until sixty merry, frolicking minutes had danced by, and become sixty grave, sober little things in the past. Then taking his hat he went out. He took a circuitous route around to the back of the house, and glanced at the kitchen window. There stood Nellie, her sleeves rolled up, showing her round, white, dimpled arms; her cheeks flushed with the heat; and her eyes fixed on the cake, all beautifully brown, and not one particle burnt, before her. Glancing up she saw Mr. Hartley, and called him to the window, then pointing triumphantly to the cake, said—

"There, didn't I tell you I could do it?"

"Well, I am sure I said you undoubtedly could," he replied, very gravely.

"Yes; but you didn't mean it."

"Did you do it all alone?" he asked, provokingly.

"You can ask Doris if I didn't. Didn't I, Doris?" appealing to the cook, who stood watching her with admiring eyes.

"Yes, indeed, she did that, sir."

"Why don't you cut it, and try whether it is as good inside as out?" advised he.

"That is just what I am going to do, but *you* shall not have one bite of it," saucily.

"If I am not to have any, I certainly shall not stand here and watch you eat it. I should grow covetous;" and with a queer smile, he went around to the side of the house, and sat down on a rustic bench in the shade, then taking a paper from his pocket, and opening it, soon to all appearances became very much interested in its contents. In a very few minutes, Nellie joined him; she stood immediately before him with a piece of the gingerbread smoking hot in her hand.

"Now, I'm going to show you *how* good it is, and make you watch me eat the whole piece just for punishment." Scarcely had she raised it to her mouth, for the first bite, when he made a sudden spring, and taking her by surprise, imprisoned both her hands tightly in his, then lifting the one that held the gingerbread to his mouth, took a goodly bite of it. She was so astonished that for a moment she was still, while he swallowed the first mouthful, and took the second, then she struggled to liberate herself, but he held her firmly until he had eaten every particle of the cake out of her hand, then released her, saying—

"He was much obliged, and that her cake was excellent." It had taken her so completely aback, that she did not know whether to laugh or cry, so she did neither, but stood soberly returning his quizzical look. He let her stand a minute, then invited her to take a seat beside him; she deigned no reply, but turning, went majestically into the house.

She did not go back to the kitchen; no indeed, she wouldn't for the world, for she knew Doris would want to know about the cake, so she ran up to her own room.

"How hateful! how provoking! and right out of my hand, too, it was *too much*; he shall beg my pardon for it, I'll never speak to him until he does." And her cheeks flushed and her eyes flashed. She would go right back and tell him so that very minute,—why couldn't she have done it at the time? What on earth made her act so stupid and walk right off without saying one word? Should she go? What should she say when she got there? He would only get the better of her, and she stood irresolute with her hand on the door knob. She would not go, she would treat him with silent contempt," and the red lips half curled, half pouted, and looked as kissable as possible. She would not even think about it; it was completely beneath her." So she took a book, and sat down in a lazy looking chair, and between reading and pouting, let the whole bright summer day slip by, and never knew that it was going, until the shadows gathered all through the room, and the dinner bell rung.

She stole part of the anger she had been lading



Mr. Hartley with, and threw it on herself for allowing him to make her waste a day. She made her toilet as quickly as possible, but they were half through dinner when she entered the dining-room. Her aunt greeted her wonderingly, with,

"What has kept you so long, Nellie?" She replied half impatiently, that she was reading, and had forgotten to dress until the bell rung.

"Why, I should a-thought you'd been hungry," said May.

"Doubtless she would if she hadn't eaten a large piece of gingerbread about noon, Puss," remarked Mr. Hartley. Nellie preserved a dignified silence.

"Gingerbread, Nellie! Why, I didn't have any for lunch," said May, childishly; then added, turning to Betsy, "Betsy, I wish you'd bring me a piece of gingerbread."

"I reckon there is none left," said Mr. Hartley, gravely.

"Oh, there is plenty, sir," said Betsy, bringing in the whole cake, minus the one piece. When she had passed it to May, she was about placing it on the sideboard, when Mr. Hartley said:

"Betsy, I believe I will have a piece."

"Why, Robert! I never knew you to eat gingerbread before, and at dinner too; how queer!" exclaimed Mrs. Holmes.


He made no reply, but Nellie's cheeks flushed, for she knew well enough, though her eyes were fastened on her plate, that he was giving her the benefit of one of *his looks*. She did not go to the drawing-room as

usual, after dinner, but sought her own room, on the plea to her aunt, that she wanted to finish her book.

The next day the gingerbread was produced at lunch, and Nellie had the felicity of seeing Mr. Hartley eat the last piece, she never having so much as tasted it. She kept her promise well: thus far she had neither looked at, nor spoken to him, and he seemed to have forgotten that she was in existence.

And so a week slipped by. She tried her best to think no more about it, but it was constantly in her mind, and each day her anger toward *herself* increased, as it diminished toward Mr. Hartley; she was growing very much ashamed of herself, though she would not acknowledge it even to herself. Whenever she recalled the affair she would remember how Mr. Hartley had looked while eating the gingerbread out of her hand, and every day he gained a greater power over her. His very forgetfulness and unconcern fascinated her. She would wonder uncomfortably what he thought of her, and then the very humbling suggestion would present itself, that it was not likely that he thought of her at all. And so a week passed by.

## CHAPTER XI

NOTHER Saturday afternoon, just one week from the day she had baked the gingerbread, Nellie was under the old willow tree. Little by little she had exonerated Mr. Hartley from all blame! Little by little she had thrown all upon herself, until this afternoon she was so heartily ashamed of herself, and so out of humor with everybody, that she was utterly wretched.

"It was so foolish to make a fuss about a piece of gingerbread! But then it wasn't the cake; she didn't care a toss for that, but to have eaten it right out of her hand, it *was* too much!"

But the birds carolled most witchingly, among the branches of the tree, and the brook rippled so clear and cool that the two together coaxed her into a better humor.

"It was very disagreeable to live in the same house with a person, and never speak to him, but what was to be done? *She* wouldn't make any concession, no indeed! not if she never spoke to him again. Pshaw! what was the use of thinking of it, any way? She had just wasted an afternoon, and here it was almost dark."

Just then there was the sound of light footsteps behind her, and turning quickly, she caught the outline of a figure, gliding into the grove, that lay a short distance from the tree. Springing up, she called, "May!" but there was no answer. She called again in a louder voice, "Cris!" and then, after waiting a moment, in a hesitating tone, "Mr. Hartley!" but echo alone heeded her cry. "Who could it be?" and going forward, she entered the grove determined to ferret out the mystery.

She glided among the trees almost as silently and stealthily as the figure had a moment before; and forgot again to call, for *fear* had sealed her lips. Her search was fruitless. Once again she heard the footfalls, but the trees obstructed her view, and with a strange feeling of blended fear and sadness, she turned homeward.

"Malbrook had gotten to be a strange place lately; she half believed it was haunted. But then, nobody else ever saw anything mysterious; she reckoned it was all her fancy."

And yet one might have said that it was not all fancy. For Malbrook would have been a glorious place for ghosts to have held their revels, with its deep hollow, and rising hills; its broad sweep of velvet grass, over which the shadows ever chased; its many groves and long stretches of dark, frowning woods; then, on one of its elevations, the burying-ground, with its white tombstones; the mansion itself, with the mellow light of the setting sun playing on its ivy-covered walls, tempted one to believe that

within, there were many unused, darkened chambers, and long corridors, and winding passages, in which phantoms might find hiding-places.

It is very likely Nellie thought so; for her face betokened as much as she passed up the broad winding staircase, that echoed every footfall, and glided softly through the great hall to her own room.

But there was nothing spectral there. It was a cheerful room, with its fleecy drapery, and delicately tinted furniture; with its snowy counterpane and toilet—with all a young girl's trinkets, in girlish disorder—the soft blue carpet, and crystal mirror; all bright, all beautiful, with no lurking-place for ghosts. Before the mirror stood the young girl, the fear all banished from her eyes, and a yellow sunbeam playing on her golden brown hair, and streaming down her muslin dress. A moment she loitered, with a half-smile curling her lip at the thought of her foolish fears, then left the room. The drawing-room was empty; the library deserted, and the gloomy hall, which the very sunlight shunned, brought back all her superstitions. She left it, and passed out upon the veranda. Mr. Hartley was there, and she remembered, what for a few moments she had forgotten, that she was very angry at him. He, too, seemed to have forgotten it, for he handed her a chair in his pleasant, courteous way. She couldn't help but take it, and in a few minutes she almost forgot that she had not spoken to him for a week, and was laughing and talking with him as

merrily as if she had never mentally called him hateful. A little while after he said:

"I have something for you Nellie," and leaving her, went toward a clump of trees not far off. When he came back he had a twig of hazel leaves in his hand. He gave her a cluster of little ones with such a grace she couldn't help but take them, and fastened them with her breast-pin at her throat, while he stuck one in his button-hole.

Neither made any remark, but many times during the evening Nellie looked at the leaves and thought if she had not them as a gentle reminder, she would forget that she had ever been angry with Mr. Hartley.

## CHAPTER XII



RS. HOLMES had gone to pay her annual visit to her husband's relatives, and Mr. Hartley had accompanied her as far as the city, where he might remain until she came back, his return being uncertain. May, childlike, was delighted with being alone, and said to Clemency as the carriage bore them out of sight, that she was even glad mamma was gone, for now she might sleep with Nellie ever so many nights, and wouldn't that be gay?"

But Nellie was not easily pleased; she wandered restlessly from room to room, but every place seemed desolate. She tried to read, but the library was dark and gloomy, the few sunbeams that struggled in through its heavy crimson curtains, only serving the more plainly to show its loneliness. Then she sought the drawing-room, thinking she would overcome her sense of loneliness by music, but she started at the sound of her own voice, and left the room. Even her own light footfall upon the polished oaken floor of the halls made her start, and turn her head quickly, as if expecting to find some one following her.

"What had made her so foolishly nervous? It was not the first time she had been left alone, and she

wasn't alone either, for there were the servants, and every now and then she caught the sound of May's merry laughter. She would go into the more unfrequented parts of the house, and see if she could not find something to amuse her, something to dispel her absurd fears."

She opened one of the heavy mahogany doors leading into the parlors, and as it closed by its own weight behind her, a cold shiver ran over her. The parlors were seldom used, excepting on state occasions, and their massive furniture, in the feeble light that straggled through the closed casements, to her excited imagination assumed strange unearthly shapes, and the white marble statues, standing out in dazzling relief from the pervading gloom, became to her the genii of the place. She hastened through several apartments, massive in their elegance, for all that wealth could purchase, and art devise, were gathered within Malbrook's walls. There was nothing new there to Nellie, and as she passed from room to room, she scarce noticed the gathered gems of perfected art. She sought her favorite room; it was a ladies' boudoir—a small room, and dainty enough for a bride. Only Time had discolored the original purity of the fleecy lace, with which the windows were hung, and had also laid its destroying touch upon the delicate hue of the furniture. No one ever sought the room but Nellie; but ever since she was a little child, and had spent her rainy days wandering over the old mansion, it had been her favorite spot. To-day, the moment she entered it, she lost her fear, and

found herself again weaving her Malbrook romance. She went over to the window, and drawing aside the lace drapery, looked out. There was the old willow right in sight. She was sure others had stood where she now did, and watched, with more interest than she, that old tree—watched for another's coming, for surely there was never a grander trysting tree."

Presently her eye was arrested. She passed her hand softly over the glass. Yes, it was surely so; there was a name cut in the glass, with a diamond. She looked more closely, and there, a miniature of the one on the tree, was "Madge." She knew it was so; this had been Madge's room; why had she never seen it before. And, as by a sudden impulse, she drew a diamond from her finger, and right under Madge's name, *cut her own*.

She knew not why, but the moment she had done it a sad oppressed feeling fell upon her heart. She felt as though, by that little act, she had linked her fate with Madge's. And what was Madge's fate? Aye, if she only knew! and turning wearily from the window, she left the room, and retracing her steps, entered the library, and taking her hat and a book, left the house.

What had come over her to be so full of fears and forebodings?"

What was there to be afraid of? She would throw it off! and she quickened her step until she entered the woods. They seemed to her darker than was their wont, and she thought the birds must have forgotten to sing, it was so *very* still. She seated

herself upon a fallen log, and opening her book, was soon lost to herself and her surroundings. It was Byron's "Childe Harold." Long she read, fascinated by its mingled sadness and beauty. At length she closed her book. The woods were darker and quieter than when she entered them, and the little birds, raising their heads from beneath their downy wings, chirped a low shrill note, as if chiding the intruder.

She wandered down the dark, steep side of the ravine, the gravel every now and then giving way under her feet, and the little stones rolling down the abrupt descent, and falling with a slight splash into the stream, that gurgled at its base. She strolled slowly along its bank, slightly fearful again in the stillness. She had never been there when it was so late before, for the sun had dropped behind the hills and—

"Silently, one by one, in the infinite meadow of Heaven:  
Blossomed the lovely stars, the forget-me-nots of the angels."

Suddenly she paused. Her hand pressed her heart, her lips were parted, and wonder and terror looked from her eyes; for a few paces before her, in that same bend of the ravine, were the strange figures she had seen on that bright sunshiny morning. This time the woman was kneeling, her hands clasped and her beautiful face turned upward, so that those sorrowful, pleading eyes, might meet the man's, which were hidden by his low-drawn hat; again as before, as if having discovered another's presence, he raised his finger threateningly and they were gone.

Nellie, as aroused from a dream, and drawn by some

secret fascination, sprang to the spot, and there a small velvet case, half buried in the gravel, was the only trace to show what *had* been. She opened it, and in a miniature painting was that beautiful, sorrowful face. Holding it tightly, she fled like a startled deer homeward, and ever and anon, as she sped through the woods, the whip-poor-will told her his sad story, and the owls sat and hooted at her as she passed.

When at last she emerged from the dark shade, the bright moonlight showed her, that in her terror she had taken the wrong road, and was rapidly approaching the gleaming stones of the burying-ground. With redoubled fear and superstition, she turned, and almost flying, never stopped until she reached the house, and sought her own room, where she threw herself into a chair, all pale and trembling, and strove to think.

"Was it really so? Or had it been a fearful dream from which she had just awakened? No, it was no dream, for there lay the miniature in her lap.

"Who was this strange, lovely creature? and why had that fierce man such an influence over her? What had brought them to that wild, dark ravine? Would they ever come again? Why had their coming so filled her with dread and superstition? To be sure it was strange that they should thus haunt Malbrook—but then—Oh! she did wish Aunt Amy hadn't gone, or that Mr. Hartley would come home."

Just then Clemency entered with her supper, but she was so absorbed with her own thoughts, that she did not notice the distressed look upon the maid's

countenance, and that her talkative tongue was for once silent. She placed the tray on a stand by Nellie's side, then left the room, pausing a moment at the door to look back anxiously on her young mistress, and little May, who was safe in Somnus' bosom. When she again entered to remove the tray, she found Nellie in the same position, and nothing to indicate her having left it, excepting the empty cup; everything else remained untasted. The maid cast another anxious glance upon her mistress, then leaving a saucer of berries and a piece of cake, saying to herself that "Perhaps she would be hungry afore morning," quietly left the room. Nellie sat still a long time thinking, until her heart ached, then went over to the open window.

The round full moon had risen, and cast its mellow light over the land. As she looked upon the evening sky hung with its bright lights, her aching head and heart grew soothed. Alas! her eyes too soon fell to earth again. Before her stretched the woods, their gaunt branches looming up against the sky, and right beyond, she could see the deep descent of the wild ravine. And to one side, in the moonlight, lay the burying-ground. As she looked, the wild terror and superstition again rushed over her, and turning shudderingly from the window, she sought respite from her fears in sleep. But Sleep, some one has said, is like a coy maiden, always shunning those who court her most. Nellie summoned her in vain. All night long she tossed restlessly on her pillow, and the first grey streak that shot up from

the east, found her upon the veranda. It was very quiet in the morning twilight; the air was fresh almost to chilliness, and the flowers and slender blades of grass bent under their weight of dew-drops. She hid her face in her hands as if to shut out all around her, and when, a moment after, a low, half timid voice spoke her name, she turned all pale and trembling, to find Clemancy, with anxious face, looking at her.

"Oh, Clemancy, how you frightened me!" she exclaimed.

"Did I, miss? I'm very sorry," said the maid, in a remorseful tone.

"But you see it's as how I couldn't sleep, and you so alone like. You'll be taking cold out here. Do come in, Miss Nellie, for because I'm afraid may be it ain't quite safe out here, and—and—I do declare! I wish Mr. Hartley would come home." And the girl's look and tone was truly distressing.

"Why, Clemancy, what is the matter? Why do you wish Mr. Hartley would come home, and why isn't it quite safe out here?" questioned Nellie earnestly, and drawing nearer to the girl.

"Oh! it's nothing, miss. It would only trouble and frighten you, and you look so white and tired like, already," replied she.

"Tell me, immediately, Clemancy! I cannot bear this suspense," said Nellie, impatiently. "What is it that would trouble and frighten me?"

"Well then, miss," began the girl, in a low tone, "you know yesterday, when you went out for a

walk, you staid so long, and it got so late, that I got uneasy like. But I thought I'd wait a bit longer, and I did, and still you didn't come, then I do declare I couldn't stand it a minute longer, so I says to Cris, 'Cris, it's queer Miss Nellie don't come,' and he says, looking down the road all concerned like—'Yes, Clemancy, it is queer, the queerest thing I ever came across; the stars are up; *remarkable!*' You know that is a word of his, Miss. Then says I, 'Hadn't you better go after her?' and he says, 'I rather reckon I had; which way did she take?' Then I said he had best go to the woods, for I knew you liked the place. He started off at a good round pace, and I stood right here waiting for him. After a good bit he came back, all pale and scared like, and I do declare, I thought I should a keeled over, miss, for my heart misgave me that something had befell you, and I said 'Oh, Cris, what is the matter? where is she?' meaning you, miss, and he said 'She—she'—as if he didn't know what I meant, and I thought the poor lad had clean gone daft, so I said, real cross like—'Why, Cris, you stupid fellow, what ails you?' and he said," and unconsciously she lowered her voice to a frightened whisper, "'Oh, Clemancy, it was so dreadful!' and I said, 'What is so dreadful? Where is Miss Nellie?' but he didn't seem to hear me, but just kept on, 'You see when I had went through the woods, I thought I'd just go down by the side of the deep hollow, and it was so remarkable still, and I didn't see miss anywhere, and was just going to come



back, when I turned for a last look, and there, right down at the bend, was a dark-looking man with a big cloak, and his hat all over his eyes, and kneeling right before him was a beautiful lady with her two sorry eyes looking up at his, and her white hands all clasped like, and just while I looked they disappeared like, and I tell you, Clem, it will come to no good; they wasn't human critters; none ever saw a human critter go into thin air like them did; besides, human critters never come to that dark, scary place. I tell you, Clem, them was spooks. Well, miss, just then you came, and I didn't like to say nothing, for you looked so lonely like, anyhow. But in the night I was standing by the window thinking of how lonely you was, and of the poor sorry lady, when right down there"—and the maid pointed to a clump of locust trees, "I saw the dark man in the large cloak, and he raised his hand, and shook his long white fingers at the old house. I rubbed my eyes to be sure it was so, and when I looked again he was gone into thin air I reckon, and I am afraid it is as Cris says—they are spooks."

During this recital Nellie had grown weaker and weaker, and when it was closed she was obliged to lean against one of the vine-wreathed pillars for support. "Who was this dreadful man? and perhaps, even now he was watching them from some hidden recess." She strove to conceal her fears, and assured Clemency that it was nothing but her imagination, for she could not have seen the man in the night, although she knew full well that the moon

had made it as light as day. But she yielded very willingly to the maid's entreaties, and went into the house. Entering the library, she threw herself on the sofa, and after drinking a cup of hot coffee, fell asleep from sheer exhaustion.

At first her sleep was light and broken by fearful dreams; but soon it grew deeper and undisturbed. Two or three hours later, when May entered the room, she found her still sleeping, and stealing up to her side, kissed her softly.

Nellie started, and opening her eyes, saw the happy face of the little girl bending over her. She drew a long sigh of relief. It seemed as if it had all been a nightmare, that the morning sun and May's bright face had dispelled. Everything looks brighter by daylight. Nellie almost wondered at her dreadful fear of the past night, but still the feeling of loneliness oppressed her. She could endure it very well while it was day, but she shuddered at the thought of another such a night as last. May, too, seemed already tired of being alone, and nestling close to Nellie, said:

"What made you get up so early, Nellie? I've hunted for you every place, and couldn't find you. It's awful stupid everywhere. I would like to see mamma, and Uncle Robert, wouldn't you?"

Nellie said, "Yes," with a sigh.

"What is the matter, Nellie? What makes you draw such a long breath? and what do you look so white for?"

"I have a headache, May."



Headache! what an expressive word, including heartache and weary sighs and bitter tears!

"I'm so sorry, Nellie."

*So sorry!* Dear little May! How full of sympathy is a child's heart, and what is more beautiful than sympathy? It filled Nellie's eyes all full of tears, and made her head better upon the spot.

"Shall I tell you a story what will make your head feel good, Nellie?"

"Yes, dear." Then there was a child's story, told in a child's way. When it was ended she laid her head beside Nellie, and said disconsolately,

"Oh, Nellie, I do wish mamma and Uncle Robert would come. Clemancy is so cross, and Doris and Betsy are telling secrets, and won't let me stay in the kitchen, and Cris acts the queerest. He jumps, every time I speak to him, as if he was scared, and sits staring right ahead of him at nothing, all the while. If just Uncle Robert would come, I wouldn't care so much. Oh dear!" and the child half gaped, half sighed.

"S'pose you tell a story, Nellie."

"What shall it be, May?"

"Oh Nellie, it will be horrid if Uncle Robert doesn't come back until mamma does. Just think, a whole week of such long days as this," and the little girl had forgotten the story, in her loneliness. Just then there was a step in the hall, and May bounded from the room with a joyous shout. In a moment after she returned, holding Mr. Hartley by the hand, and exclaiming:

"Oh, Nellie, Uncle Robert has come! ain't you glad?"

*How* glad she was, the brilliant color in her cheek, and the sparkles in her eyes testified. She had sprung up when he entered, and now she came forward with her hand extended, saying:

"I am very glad."

His answering smile was a very pleased one. He took her extended hand, saying:

"He feared they might find it lonely; besides, he found it hard to stay away from home," with a look that told right plainly *why* he found it hard. There were conscious blushes and dimples in Nellie's face, as she sought her room to arrange her hair, which her nap had tumbled.

"How glad she was! She wouldn't be afraid any more, no, not one bit. *That* was the reason she was so glad he had come, of course it was."

"Oh, Nellie, Nellie! like all your kind, ever whispering falsehoods to your heart."

When she reached her room, Clemancy was there for the ostensible purpose of helping if she was needed. But the truth of the matter was, she had seen Mr. Hartley coming, and as Cris had gone to take his horse, she could find no one else to tell her rejoicings to, as she would not deign to speak on such a subject to Doris or Betsy.

"Oh, Miss Nellie! ain't it just more'n good Mr. Hartley's to home? I never was so glad in all my life! I never was! I ain't a bit afraid any more, and don't care how much the big spook shakes his

slim finger at the old house. But what on earth could have brought him back so soon? It is, as Cris would say, re-mark-a-ble."

Nellie, seeing that Clemancy's tongue was about to renew its clatter, left the room before it had time to get started. She found Mr. Hartley in the library, standing alone by the window, May having gone to impart the news to the already informed Clemancy.

"How is the headache, Nellie?" asked he, turning as she entered.

"It is all gone," wondering how he knew she had one. He smiled oddly; perhaps *he* was wondering what had cured it so suddenly.

"Do you know what sort of a day it is?"

"I believe the sun is shining."

"Have you any objections to becoming certain on that point; and may my dapple grey assist you in the conclusion?"

"Oh, that would be splendid!" he looked amused at her childlike pleasure, and said:

"Well, go and get your hat, and bring Puss. I guess the buggy will hold three."

A few minutes after, and the dapple grey was going at a brisk canter down the winding carriage way. May, on a stool at Nellie's feet, kept looking up into her face, exclaiming, delightedly, "Nice, ain't it, Nellie?" and as they passed through the heavy iron gate, which Cris was waiting to close after them, she leaned over and called out:

"Nice, ain't it, Cris?" then whispered softly to Nellie: "I wish Cris could go too, poor fellow."

Ah! democratic childhood!

Very bright smiles chased each other in rapid succession through Nellie's rosy lips and dimples, and Mr. Hartley regarded the two as children whom he had succeeded in making happy.

"Oh, Uncle Robert, I tell you this is bunkum. It was good of you not to leave me and Nellie alone; but I should have thought you would have rather staid in the city. Did you go to the *matinée*?"

"Hardly, Puss. You forget I was only there one night. I was afraid to stay any longer for fear I would miss the birds' *matinée*, you know," replied he, gravely. May looked as pleased as if she had been one of the veritable birds, then said:

"I should like to go to a big city *matinée*. I do want to go to the city. I want to see Judge Hasbrook. I like him ever so much. He comes here to see Nellie; he's her godfather. Have you got a godfather, Uncle Robert?"

Mr. Hartley said he hadn't.

"That is queer! neither have I. What makes Nellie have one, I wonder? Do you know Nellie's godfather, Uncle Robert?"

"No, Puss."

"Well, that's funny. I know him right well, and I ain't so old as you. He is a fat old gentleman, with not very good ears. He has two sons, but they can hear; they are Fred and Charley—and he has a daughter, but I don't like her."

"Why not?" looking amused at the child's talk.

"'Cause—that's why."

"Intelligible," said Mr. Hartley, smiling at Nellie, who had been listening.

"She isn't nice, Uncle Robert; not a bit. Clemaney says she smiles too sweet."

"Smiles too sweet! why, Puss, I am sure it is a very good fault to smile sweetly."

"But too sweet, Uncle Robert! so *sweet* that it's almost *sour*." Mr. Hartley laughed.

Children tell a deal of truth in their childish talk. They were quiet then for a little, each busy with his thoughts. May and Nellie were looking at the scenery.

"Where are your thoughts, Nellie?" asked Mr. Hartley.

"I was thinking how very foolish Eve was to have tasted the apple." Mr. Hartley looked amused.

"It *was* foolish; but one could hardly have expected anything else. It would scarce have been *woman-like* to have left untouched, what was within her reach, especially when it had the additional charm of being forbidden." Nellie shrugged her shoulders impatiently, and said:

"I don't think it just, that Eve should bear all the blame. If you censure *her*, what do you think of Adam?"

"What do you want me to think? Denounce him?"

"As you please. Eve yielded to the *serpent*, *he*, because a *woman* asked him," contemptuously.

Mr. Hartley laughed, and said he feared man

would always follow his first father's example, while May, who had been quietly listening, exclaimed:

"Uncle Robert, don't you think Adam took the biggest bite?"

Mr. Hartley said he was afraid his little Eve-defenders had the advantage over him. The next mile was a quiet one. Nellie thinking of—perhaps Eve; Mr. Hartley, it would be impossible to say of what; and May, whom ~~fading~~ always made sleepy, had pillowed her head in Nellie's lap, and her long lashes were resting on her rosy cheeks. One of Nellie's hands nestled in May's black hair, looking very white, by the contrast. Mr. Hartley looked at the little hand and made a movement as if to imprison it in his own, but catching a glimpse of the childlike face of the owner, forebore, and a moment after one might have seen, from the curve of his handsome moustache, that there was a smile lurking under it, whether at what he deemed his meditated foolishness or not, we cannot tell. Nellie, glancing at him just then, caught the smile, and asked:

"What are you smiling at, Mr. Hartley?" He raised his eyebrows, and said provokingly,

"Do you want to know?"

"I shouldn't have asked, if I had not. But it is entirely optional whether you answer or not," impatiently.

"What if I should say I was thinking of you?"

"I shouldn't believe you," haughtily.

He gave her one of those looks that fascinated while they irritated her, but said nothing, only whip-

ping up the horse to a quicker pace. Nellie very impolitely turned her face directly from him, and closed her lips with a determined expression. The ride was a silent one then. May sleeping soundly; Nellie inclined to pout; and Mr. Hartley apparently oblivious of her presence. That was what provoked her the most. He had such a way of making one angry, and then acting as if he had forgotten one was in existence. She wondered if he had ever had anything annoy him in his life. She had often tried to provoke him, but he had always turned it upon herself, and made her feel as cheap as possible. She had never spent five minutes with him, that he had not made her successively angry and pleased a dozen times. She half believed he did it on purpose.

Of course he did, you foolish child. If you had had half an eye, you would have seen that it amused him to see you change so in a minute, at just one little word. He liked to watch the varying expressions on your face; to see you so earnest and excited over little things. It was something new to a man who had spent years in Paris, and London, and the heartless cities of the Old World, to meet with one who so blended child and woman.

And all this time, while the mile-posts glided past them, little May slept on, and Nellie, who had fallen to castle building in the quiet, was as unconscious as the little sleeper, that the horse's head was homeward turned. At length, when they had scarce a mile to go, May woke up, very indignant that they should have let her sleep all that way.

"Why, Uncle Robert, why didn't you wake me up? and what makes Nellie so still? Has she been asleep too?"

"Ask her, Puss," said Mr. Hartley, gravely.

May peeped around into Nellie's face, and said;

"Why no, Uncle Robert, her eyes are wide open. What for makes you so quiet, Nellie?"

Nellie made no reply, and May, as if having forgotten her, kept on:

"Did you see anything pretty after I went to sleep, Uncle Robert?"

"I saw you," with a smile:

May gave a pleased little laugh, and looking up into his face, said simply:

"I'm right glad you think I'm pretty, Uncle Robert; I like to be pretty. Nellie is pretty too, ain't she? I reckon she's prettier than me," peeping around into Nellie's face, which was a very blushing one then.

"We rode a heap of miles, didn't we? It's almost dark. I hope dinner is ready, for I'm awful hungry. I could eat—why I could eat four chickens, and a hen, and a bowl of milk, and a"—

"There, hold on, Puss!" said Mr. Hartley, laughing.

"Why Uncle Robert, I *could* eat that much, and a hunch of cake as big as my head into the bargain, I'm so awful hungry!"

But they were before the door then, and in a moment the famished little girl was capering up the steps in search of Clemancy, to get her ready for dinner.

When Mr. Hartley helped Nellie from the buggy, he drew her back one moment by the hand he held, and said in a low tone, accompanied by that same quizzical raising of the eyebrows:

"It seems to me one of our little girls has lost her tongue."

Nellie snatched away her hand, and ran into the house.

"One of our little girls indeed! She would be happy to know which was the older, May or she?" At supper she maintained a dignified silence, and when, after tea, she went to the library, Mr. Hartley gave her no attention, devoting himself entirely to May's amusement. She thought she had offended him, and then it occurred to her that she had not been very polite, to treat him as she had, when he had come home expressly for May's and her sake. She had scarce spoken to him during the ride, and had never thanked him for it. She colored as she thought how unladylike he must think her. What should she do? Was it too late to thank him yet?"

A little while afterward, Clemency took May off to bed. Nellie had taken a book, and appeared to be reading. When they were alone, Mr. Hartley stood at the table near which she was sitting. She knew he was looking at her, though she kept her eyes fastened on her book.

He waited a moment, then went over to the book-case, standing with his back to her, and examining the titles, as if in search of some particular volume.

It was Nellie's turn to look now, and she did it

with her lips half parted, and a look of uncertainty on her face.

"Mr. Hartley!" in a hesitating tone.

"Nellie?" turning around immediately.

"I'm much obliged for my ride. I forgot to thank you," with a heightened color.

"You are very welcome," gravely; then added,


"Let me thank you now for closing your book. I was afraid you were going to compel me to spend my evening reading." Nellie laid her book on the table, and asked "What she could do for him?"

He glanced at her harp, that stood in its corner, enveloped in the covering he had never yet seen lifted from it, and then at her. She met the glance with a defiant smile, that said:

"Ask me, and I'll sing; but my will is equal to yours."

He divined the meaning of the smile, and gave her an odd look, then said, bringing the board, "I believe you play chess."

## CHAPTER XIII.

HE Autumn days had come, "the saddest of the year," and the autumn nights, with their golden moon and paling stars, held their sway. On one of these nights, some beams from this same moon stole in between the grey stone pillars of the veranda, and found two figures there.

Nellie Holmes was standing by one of those massive columns, and Mr. Hartley was by her side.

He had been very quiet all the evening, listening to her as she talked, now in a merry strain, now in one half sorrowful. Every now and then, as she would turn her face toward him, she would meet his eyes fixed upon her face, with an expression that crimsoned her cheeks. As the time glided by, she too grew silent, looking out into the moonlight listlessly. At length Mr. Hartley broke the quiet by saying, in a low tone:

"I am going West to-morrow, before daylight."

She started, the color leaving her cheeks, and asked, with an eagerness of which she was unconscious,

"How long will you be gone?"

"I cannot tell, but I will meet you in the city before spring."

Before spring, and now it was only October!

There was a tired look upon her face; she leaned against the pillar for support. A chill crept into the still air, and a shiver ran over her. Saying she was cold, and it was late, she bade him good-night, and was about going into the house; but he caught her hand as she was passing, and drawing her toward him, said reproachfully:

"Are you not going to say good-bye, Nellie?"

There was a tear in her eye at the way he spoke her name, "Nellie."

And now the color flooded her cheeks, as he drew her nearer to him, and encircled her with his arm. She hardly knew it at first, it was so gracefully and naturally done; but in a second she turned upon him a startled, wondering face, and strove to liberate herself. But he only drew her the closer to him, and bent his head until she felt his breath upon her cheek, then suddenly, as if recollecting himself, murmured, "Not yet! not yet!" and let her glide from his arms.

She went quickly into the house, and was speeding to her room, when she met Mrs. Holmes on the stairs. She laid her hand on Nellie's shoulder and asked, anxiously:

"Have you been out on the veranda all this cool evening, with nothing around you?"


Nellie's cheeks crimsoned, and she averted her face, lest her aunt should divine in her looks what had been around her but a moment ago, and saying she wasn't cold, passed by, and sought her own room.

She leaned her head against the open casement so that the night air might cool her burning cheeks. What caused that wild tumult in her heart? Why did thrill after thrill—whether of joy or sorrow she knew not—pass over her at the thought of the last few moments? Still that breath was on her cheek; still she heard another's than her own heart beat; a sudden sorrow fell on her while she murmured softly:

"Not yet! not yet!"

Dark clouds swept up the sky. The moon and stars were veiled beneath their sable hue: an October storm burst upon the earth, and the approaching thunder seemed to shriek "Not yet! not yet!"

#### CHAPTER XIV.

 GREAT city, like a great heart, full of blended good and evil, joy and misery. On the broad, grand streets, Fortune, with partial hand, had reared stately homes of stone and marble, and scarce a dozen blocks off, high dingy tenement houses faced each other in narrow alleys, looking as hard, and black, and pitiful, as the crimes and anguish they concealed.

In the dining-room of an elegant home, a family was gathered about the breakfast-table.

"It seems very good to have you back again, Nellie, and we have every promise of a gay winter," said Fred. It was the morning after Nellie's arrival.

"And," joined in Charley, "you are just in time for the first opera. We have the best box in the building this season."

"That is good. You were not so fortunate last year."

"Pshaw! that was just a notion of sis's. She couldn't see, and be seen, quite enough to suit her fancy. But in point of view of the stage it was quite as advantageously situated as this year."

"Charley is as amiable as ever you see, Nellie," said Clara, ironically, from behind the coffee urn.

"Charles, behave yourself and see if you can't get



through one meal in peace," said the Judge, bringing his fat hand down on the table with such force as to make all the dishes rattle.

"It appears to me, Clara, you haven't put enough sugar in my tea, and this egg ain't half done," said Aunt Lucet, complainingly.

"Why, then put it into the water and let it boil more," advised Charley.

"Put it in when it's broke? How can I?" asked the old lady, querulously.

"Ah! I don't know. But it was very foolish in you to take it out until you knew it was done," provokingly.

"Until I knew it was done, indeed! Brother, do you hear that?" in an exasperated tone.

"Charles, behave!" repeated the Judge.

"Yes, father; I believe you made that remark before."

"I did, sir! and the next time I have cause to make it you'll leave the table."

"Humph! who'd ever dream I was eighteen."

The old gentleman paid no attention to this remark, only saying to his sister:

"Lucet, if your egg don't suit, have it removed and take another."

"Does it seem natural?" asked Fred, in a whisper, of Nellie, who sat by his side.

"It seems very good to be back," with a half smile at the familiar bickerings.

"There is a new star in society this season, Nellie. A very handsome Spaniard," said Clara.

"And," chimed in Charlie, all the girls are dying for love of him, and can't for their lives discover his preference. "It appears to me he comes here pretty often," said Aunt Lucet, as usual taking the opposite to Charley.

"I shouldn't wonder if he *would* come pretty often *now*," said Charley, glancing at Nellie.

"How do you like Mr. Hartley, Nellie?" asked Clara. Before she had time to reply, the Judge said:

"He called on me about two months since, and I wanted him to come up to the house; but he was going West in an evening train, and had business to transact before leaving."

"You never told us he had called, father! But, Nellie, you haven't told me how you liked him?" repeated Clara, quizzingly.

"Well, sis, that is worthy of you. Ask a girl how she likes as fascinating a man as Mr. Hartley, after living under the same roof with him a half a year or more!" said Charley.

"And did *you* see him too?" asked Clara in astonishment.

"Yes, I saw him, too; have you any objections?"

"Certainly, none in the least," sneeringly. "But I think father and you are very communicative."

"Why, what is it to you, whether we saw him or not? If you are so anxious to see him yourself, though, you will doubtless have an opportunity before the winter is over, that is if Nellie don't get tired of us all, and go home."



"Is there any danger of that, Nellie?" asked the Judge; then, without waiting for an answer:

"As soon as your breakfast is settled, I want you to tune up your pipes. Do you know I came very near going to Malbrook last week, just for the express purpose of hearing a song."

"Why didn't you? We would have been so glad to have seen you." He smiled at her earnestness, and said he meant to keep her in practice this time, at any rate.

"Fred, why the deuce don't you eat your breakfast?" asked Charley of his brother, who sat quietly balancing his spoon on the rim of his cup.

"I'm not hungry," was the quiet reply.

"Not hungry? Why, I'm as hungry as a wolf," bountifully replenishing the stock of provision on his plate.

"You eat like one too," said Clara.

"Sis, it is very saucy to give an opinion before it is asked. But, Fred, I say, what the deuce has taken your appetite?"

"Charley, can't you ask a question without make use of such strong language?" asked the Judge, forgetting that he frequently made use of that word himself.

"I might try, father. But, Fred, why don't you answer a fellow?"

Fred didn't hear, looking abstractedly at his plate.

"Father, do you know what that is the sign of?" shaking his head wisely; then, tapping on the table with the handle of his fork, said, in an elevated tone:

"Fred, do you know what you are?" Fred, looking up, said, smiling:

"No, I don't. What do you think I am?"

"Well, I will tell you. You are in love."

He laughed lightly, and his cheeks flushed like a girl's, under the eyes that were turned on him from all sides of the table, and asked, carelessly,

"Whom am I in love with?"

"That is a question the winter will answer. But"—rising from the table—"if you good folks will excuse me, I will be off, for I see I am rather late already. Top, have you seen the professor pass yet?" addressing a little darkey, who had stood in the window, rolling his great eyes up and down the street all breakfast time.

"Yah, Massa Charles, I spec' so. He went up dem der college steps yonder, 'fore breakfast," said the odd little specimen, grinning most wonderfully.

"You little rascal! why didn't you tell me so before?"

"'Cause I spec's you rather eat."

Charley led the laugh at the truth of this remark, while the little darkey, conscious of having said something smart, tumbled head over heels in a somerset, and chuckled, "He! he! he!" This increased the laugh, and he was on the point of trying it again, when the Judge, shaking his finger fiercely at him, though his fat sides were shaking with concealed laughter, sent him from the room.

\* \* \* \* \*

"It's queer what keeps those girls so long. It is late now, and I always like to be there at the commencement of the performance," said Aunt Lucet, fretfully. No wonder she had lost her patience; she had been dressed and waiting a full half hour.

"Keep cool, Aunt Lucet; the girls require more prinking than you do, you know." Fred was just giving him a *silencing* look, when Nellie entered, and speedily changed it into one of admiration. She looked very lovely in her cherry opera cape.

"Nellie, I be switched, if you're not mighty pretty!" exclaimed Charley. She was followed immediately by Clara, and Aunt Lucet greeted them fretfully, with—

"What kept you so long? The carriage has been at the door a full hour. Let us go right off, for we are dreadful late."

Clara made no show of haste, taking a leisurely survey of herself in an opposite mirror. At length, when she had tired Aunt Lucet beyond endurance, she signified her readiness to depart.

They *were* late, the performance being one third over. Aunt Lucet was in great distress, because she never could get the hang of it, without seeing the first act. Clara rather liked being late; it created a sensation; but Nellie sided with Aunt Lucet. She loved music, and did not like to lose any of it. She did not cast one glance at the house, but sat with her eyes fixed steadily on the stage; her face becoming brilliant with excitement and pleasure.

"Nellie," said Clara, in a low tone, "there is Don

Carara, the handsome Spaniard, over in Clifford's box, opposite; look at him."

Nellie, annoyed at the interruption, looked carelessly in the assigned direction.

"Use your glass; you can't see him without," said Clara.

"He is looking this way now, I can't," and again she became absorbed in the music. Clara, too, stopped looking around, and fixed her attention on the stage.

The curtain dropped, the band struck up—it was recess.

"Nellie," whispered Charley, "there comes Clifford; he has been watching you all the evening."

"How do you know? Have you been watching him?"

"Now look at Don Carara, Nellie; he is coming this way. Ain't he *too* handsome?" said Clara.

Nellie levelled her glasses. He *was* handsome. With his wealth of raven locks; his great, restless, lustrous eyes; his lips full, and red as rubies; the upper one short and inclined to curl. But he was very near them, and she turned her glass in another direction.

"Nellie, he is coming right here; another minute, and you will be introduced to the star," whispered Fred. But before he had reached them, Nellie was completely monopolized by Mr. Clifford and Mr. Shelbourne.

"We begin to realize that winter is fairly here,

now that you have come, Miss Holmes," said Mr. Shelbourne, shaking hands with her.

"How so, Mr. Shelbourne? Are my freezing powers so great, that winter could not be winter without them?"

"Now, Miss Holmes, that is *too* bad! You know Shelbourne didn't mean that. He only meant to express the popular opinion, that no season can be a season without the charm of your presence," said Mr. Clifford, with a look that was meant to be captivating.

"How is your sister, Mr. Clifford?" asked Nellie, paying no attention to the compliment.

"Very well, I thank you. She has been watching you all the evening, and thinks you more beautiful than ever."

"You shouldn't tell tales out of school, Mr. Clifford; but I will repay your sister's compliment when I see her."

The recess was slipping by. Clara seemed to find no opportunity to introduce Don Carara. Occasionally, when Nellie would glance in that direction, she would meet his great, black eyes fixed with a half impudent, half bashful stare upon her face.

"L—— sings well to-night," remarked Mr. Shelbourne.

"Yes, some of her strains are beautiful; I think she has improved since last winter," replied Nellie.

"Nellie," whispered Charley, "just see how Don Carara watches you."

The bell rung; the curtain rose; Mr. Shelbourne

left the box; Clifford and Don Carara lingered. Nellie again turned to the stage, but Clifford kept up a constant volley of small talk in her ear. It was pretty to see the grace with which she listened, and talked together. Constantly she felt Don Carara's eyes upon her face, and at length Clara said, sweetly,

"Nellie!" She turned.

"Don Carara, my father's ward, Miss Holmes."

"Miss Holmes, I have heard of you from many, and have watched for you as anxiously as they."

Nellie bowed coldly. The constant consciousness of his eyes being fixed on her, annoyed her; she thought him impudent. Her coldness did not seem to abash him, for he left Clara, and took a seat beside her, Mr. Clifford taking his relinquished place.

At first she paid little attention, treating him indifferently, but before long, his beautiful flow of conversation, and the slight Spanish accent, that gave music to his low, soft tone, charmed her. He spoke first of the music, and then that led him to speak of Spain. He sat supporting his cheek with perfect grace upon his hand, looking up into her face with his deep, luminous eyes. She forgot her coldness; her cheeks flushed, and there was a softened brilliancy in her eyes. She forgot her gay surroundings; the wild, sweet strains of the music blended with the tale he told. She gazed, fascinated, into his face; he had cast a spell about her; she was with him in his beautiful Spain, wandering through its grand old ruins, its beautiful vineyards, and looking upon its lovely daughters, and her eyes took a deeper lus-

tre as he told her of his great love for the beautiful; and how he thought her the most beautiful of maidens, even more lovely than Spain's loveliest daughters.

The music died, and the spell was gone. She drew a little sigh of regret, and said gaily,

"Don Carara, do you carry a concealed wand?"

"Would that I did, Miss Holmes. I would not only transport you to Spain, but I would keep you there."

There was a depth of tone in the lightly-spoken words that dyed Nellie's cheeks, and made her grow cold again. The house was in confusion, the performance was over.

"Miss Holmes," said Don Carara, in his low, passionate tone, taking her hand gently in his. She looked very haughty, and attempted to snatch it from him, but he held it firmly.

"Do not look so coldly on me; my heart, you know, is Spanish, and you cannot wonder that it offered itself on the shrine of your beauty when first you dawned upon it. Nellie—start not that I speak your name so familiarly. To-night is not the first time I have heard it. To-night is but the realization of my dreams for years. Nellie, I had hoped *your* heart was Spanish too."

She turned to him coldly, yet feeling herself yielding to his power.

"Don Carara, do you forget that I have known you scarce an hour?"

"But an hour, Nellie? Oh, I have known you

all my life! My every dream has been of you! Speak, tell me you are not so cold as you would have me think! quickly, or others will claim your attention."

"I cannot."

"But you will. Destiny has made you mine." She snatched away her hand. She dare not trust herself to his fascinations any longer, and in a moment she was talking gaily to the many who bade her welcome.


Aye! her tone was gay, but a sudden fear had crept into her heart.

"Well," said Charley, when they were all gathered in the parlor after their return, "It won't be very difficult to discover the Spaniard's preference after to-night. Nellie, you should have seen the looks that "green-eyed jealousy" cast at you."

Nellie said nothing, but her cheeks flushed. Fred glanced at her a moment, then looked into the fire with a troubled expression in his eyes. "It appears to me it wasn't as good as usual; I couldn't see what they were at, all the evening. I hope we won't be late another night," said Aunt Lucet, fretfully. Clara looked disconsolate, and seemed inclined to pick a quarrel with Charley, who was not averse to the contest. Nellie saw that a storm was brewing, and saying good-night, sought her own room.

Her last thought that night were the words of Don Carara, "Destiny has made you mine." She shuddered.

## CHAPTER XV.

HE next night, and the next, and next, Nellie saw Don Carara, and thus the time passed on, bearing not a day on its swift wing, in which Don Carara could not have said,—

“Nellie Holmes will yet be mine,” while the world wagged its wise head and chimed in “Certe.”

Would the world prove a true prophet? Would Don Carara? It had annoyed many a neglected beauty sadly, to see the prize, the winter's star, so easily carried off, and none had it so vexed as Clara Hasbrook. For as Aunt Lucet had said, he had shown some partiality for her, visiting the Judge's house oftener than elsewhere. And already her friends had begun to rally her on the subject. She found it exceedingly mortifying to have him carried off so easily from her. It was all the more provoking that Nellie had not encouraged him one particle, on the contrary, treating him with the greatest coldness. But coldness had no power to banish him from her side; he was always there, giving neither glance nor word to any one else, watching her constantly with his great black eyes full of sorrow and reproach; and if by chance she rewarded his persistence with a smile, looking as if he was more than

repaid. Occasionally he would grow bolder, and drawing her hand within his arm would lead her away from her circle of admirers, and then would wield his power of fascination until, as the first night she met him, she felt herself yielding to his charms. She wearied of the contest she was forced constantly to keep up, and more than once wished for the spring, so that she might return to Malbrook. Was that her only reason for wishing for the spring? She was not the only one who longed for Malbrook. Clemancy, who had accompanied her, grew more restless every day. She did not like the way things were working. She had never liked Clara Hasbrook since she was a little girl, and had visited Nellie at Malbrook, and to use her own words, “Since she had grew up, she was disagreeabler than ever.” She had taken a dislike to Don Carara, the very first time she had seen him; she “didn't like it how he stuck so close like to Miss Nellie; and he hadn't a Christian look out of his eyes, no ways.” And then she wanted to see Cris; “she didn't know how much she thought 'o the lad until she was clean apart from him.”

One morning about a month after Nellie had been in the city, they were all in the library. There had been a promenade concert the evening before, and Don Carara had been more attentive than ever to Nellie. Clara was consequently in a delightful mood.

The Judge was reading the newspaper, with Top turning somersets behind his chair, and grinning most wonderfully at his unsuccessful attempts to

light on his feet; Aunt Lucet at her usual employment, playing backgammon alone, and looking very discontented and sour; Clara crocheting and looking not unlike her aunt; Fred and Nellie playing chess, while Charley sat by, holding his hands, his eyes fixed steadily on Clara's face, with the evident purpose of annoying her. At first, Clara pretended the unconscious; but when one knows that another's eyes are fixed upon one, it is the natural impulse to meet them. Clara bore it stoically at first, but at length grew fidgety under it, and made a mistake in her crocheting. She ripped it out, and then made it right over again, and still Charley never moved his eyes. A saint could not have borne it, let alone Clara Hasbrook. She looked up, and curling her lip asked sneeringly,

"Ain't I pretty?"

"Eh! what did you say?" asked Charley, feigning innocence.

"I asked you if I wasn't pretty?" repeated she, in the same tone.

"Why, you're not so pretty as you are sweet!" replied he, keeping his eyes steadily on her face. Clara's eyes flashed, her nostrils dilated, while she said, cuttingly,

"It is a pity a little of that quality didn't fall to you."

"They say I did have a sweet disposition when I was a child, but there is a deal of truth in the old adage, 'Evil communications corrupt good manners.'"

"You have a sweet disposition! It must have

been before you were born, then," chimed in Aunt Lucet, glad of an opportunity to give vent to her ill humor.

"Is that your opinion, Aunt Lucet?" asked Charley.

"Yes, it is my opinion, and I have *another* opinion too, and that is that you are an impudent lad," throwing the dice with unnecessary force.

"Per Hercle! aunt, you'll split the board!" exclaimed Charley, with mock alarm.

"Stop your Per Hercle! just as if I knew what it meant. It is something bad or you would say it in English." Charley snickered. Aunt Lucet grew livid with rage, while she shouted:

"Brother, do you hear that?"

"Hear what, Lucet?" asked the Judge, looking over his spectacles and paper. He was so accustomed to bickerings, that he scarce heeded them, and moreover he was a little deaf, and at times conveniently so.

"Hear what! why, hear that lad!" exclaimed the old lady, pointing with one of her shrivelled jewelled fingers at Charley.

"What have you been doing, Charles?" demanded the Judge.

"I have been doing *nothing*, father," said Charley, growing suddenly sober, and looking very innocent.

"Well, see that you keep on doing it," and the Judge went back to his paper.

Charley grinned maliciously. Aunt Lucet made the dice fairly dance, and Clara's face was the pic-

ture of scorn. Charley was quiet for a little while, Aunt Lucet and Clara apparently having forgotten him. The latter, as if to prevent further annoyance, having turned her back to him. In changing her position, she dropped the ball of yarn with which she was working, and supposing it to be at her feet left it there, drawing the yarn from it as she needed it. But the ball, instead of being in the supposed position, had rolled behind her, over to Charley's feet. He picked it up softly, and unwinding it by the yard, scattered it all about him, then called—

"Top, come here."

The little darkey left off turning somersets and obeyed, grinning most desperately, and evidently anticipating some fun, for Charley was a favorite with him. But the little fellow was doomed to disappointment this time.

"Top, did Master Phips give you anything for me this morning?" at the same time winding the yarn dexterously about the unsuspecting darkey.

"No, Massa Charles, hain't seen Massa Phips."

"Sure you haven't, Top? Don't tell a lie or you'll get pitched into the lake of fire and brimstone when you die, you know," entangling him still more effectually in the yarn.

"Yah, Massa Charles, sure sartin," rolling his eyes in utter horror at the bare thought of the fiery lake.

"How sure, Top? Hold up your right arm and tell me how sure you are, and see you don't lie."

"Sure as dead," exclaimed the darkey, holding up

his arm, and looking Charley fixedly in the face while he wound the yarn about it.

"Now hold up your left arm, and tell me how sure you are."

"Sure as dead!" replied Top, while Charley wrapped the yarn around it also.

"Now hold up your right leg and tell me how sure you are." The little nigger obeyed, repeating vigorously:

"Sure as dead!"

"Now hold up your left leg, and tell me how sure you are, and see you don't lie," said Charley with the greatest solemnity, while the darkey, pleased with the novelty of taking so many oaths, lifted his short appendage and shouted,

"Sure as dead! Dis nigger nebber tells no lies, Massa Charles!"

"Well, then go pick up Miss Clara's ball of yarn for her," having, after entangling the odd little specimen completely in it, rolled it out into the middle of the room.

Top started to do his bidding, and got in front of Clara, but could get no further. He looked at himself perfectly dumfounded, raising first one arm then another, then each of his legs, and exclaiming in astonishment as he surveyed each rising member,

"Why, Massa Charles!"

Clara having used up the yarn Charley had left her, began tugging at that which bound the little nigger, and finding it would not work, looked up to see the cause, when she discovered the plight of the



dismayed darkey. Her face became the very personification of rage. The innocent offender, always fearful as death of her, and now terrified beyond expression at her rage, fell to turning somersets, thereby making the matter a thousand fold worse, by entangling himself more effectually in the yarn. The Judge, who had been quietly watching the proceeding from over his paper, shook his fat sides with concealed laughter, while Charley clapped his hands, and fairly shouted.

Nellie and Fred, attracted by the noise, turned to see the cause, and of course joined in the laugh; while Aunt Lucet dropped her dice, and looked at Top in perfect wonderment. All were convulsed with laughter, excepting Aunt Lucet, and Clara, and Top. The former two were scowling at Charley, and the latter turning somerset after somerset, as if for dear life, and would doubtless have kept on, had not Fred gone to his rescue, holding him by force, until he had extricated him with his pen-knife. Then the little creature crept back to his place behind the Judge's chair, muttering:

"What for you do dat, Massa Charles?"

Clara looked at Charley, her face livid with rage, her lips parted as if to speak, when the door opened and the servant ushered in Mr. Shelbourne. You should have seen the change in Clara Hasbrook's face then. The color all came back; it was wreathed in smiles, and as sweet as an angel's. Charley sprang up and seizing Mr. Shelbourne's hand shook it heartily, exclaiming,

"I never was so glad in all my life to see you, Shelbourne; you are a veritable godsend, just arrived in time to save me a raking."

"A raking! pray who from, Charley?" said Shelbourne, bowing to the ladies.

"Not any of the ladies of course," said Charley, in a tone that very plainly contradicted his words.

"Mr. Shelbourne, is there any news?" asked Clara, not giving Charley time to say anything more.

"None, excepting that there is a cloud in the west that promises rain."

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Charley.

"I thought it was getting cold enough to freeze," said Fred.

"I don't believe we shall have one bit of skating this year," said Nellie, discontentedly.

"Take heart, Nellie, you will have your full yet," said the Judge.

Were his words prophetic?



## CHAPTER XVI.

**T**HERE was a party at Judge Hasbrook's. They said that so far, it was the grandest of the season. The immense suite of rooms was thronged with wealth and elegance, and beauty outrivalled herself. One glancing in upon the assembly, would have exclaimed, "A happy world; a gay world! Who would not live and be merry?"

Aye! leave that brilliant scene, step out into the night, and ere you have walked a yard, some half starved, half frozen creature, will extend a blue, fleshless hand for an alm. Forsooth! it is a merry world.

If there is any one thing at which man might murmur and question the justice of the Almighty, it is the uneven distribution of wealth. When we look upon the world and see some rolling in wealth with more than an abundance, their cup as it were overflowing, and others starving, and no man giving unto them; when we see the wicked exalted, and the righteous crushed to the earth; Doubt rises in our minds, and in his desolate voice sings:

"Evil has won in the horrid feud  
Of ages with the Throne;  
Evil stands on the neck of Good,  
And rules the world alone."

But—

"Evil is only the slave of Good,"

and what is man that he should judge his Maker? The heavy doors and richly draped windows shut out the darkness and the sorrow it held from the gay throng in Judge Hasbrook's parlors, and those favored ones of Fortune gave the afflicted no thought. "All went merry as a marriage bell."

"Is there any hope of me having your hand in a set to-night, Miss Holmes?" asked a fop with pretty frizzled hair, and a delicious perfume of Lubin's about him.

"You may judge for yourself; here is my card."

"Not any chance for me, unless you intend dancing until noon to-morrow," looking disconsolately at the long list of names.

The next moment she was on the floor with Fred.

"A deuced lucky fellow that Hasbrook!" muttered the fop. Don Carara was standing near by, watching Nellie. He had as yet danced but once, and that was with her. She had been as heartless and cruel as ever, so the Spaniard stood a little apart with a sorrowful look in his great, dark eyes.

Are you losing faith in destiny, Don Carara?

Clara was in another part of the room, dancing and looking very sweet and smiling. Charley was in the same set, and occasionally, when he would meet his sister, he would whisper:

"You look very sweet," and then she would look sweeter still. The world has a pretty face!

There is always an act behind as well as in front of the scene, and if any one had glanced at an open door, that led no one knew where, for the background was dark, they would have seen the family servants gathered. Prominent among them was Clemancy, paying little heed to the many, with her eyes fixed earnestly on a few of those merry actors.

"Who were they, she was so earnestly watching? Hear her thoughts:

"Sakes! but I wish Mr. Hartley was here to-night. Miss Nellie looks so pretty! She cuts every body clean hollow. I'm beat if that man of Spain ain't killin' hisself for loving her. I'm sorry like for him, but then he hasn't the right look out of his big eyes, what everybody raves over, and I'm of the opinion that he makes a sheer fool of hisself, standing moping, just because Miss Nellie don't keep smiling at him. She would treat him a heap better if he would fly 'round, and be right spry like. I'm glad of one thing, however, she has completely fizzled that Clara Hasbrook. She is like a sweet smellin' flower with a wasp in it. I'll be beat if I don't wish Mr. Hartley would come back. I'm afraid, like, Miss Nellie will forget him with so many hanging around her."

"Charley, go and bring Nellie here," said the Judge, sitting down near an uncovered harp. She was talking gaily to a circle of gentlemen, very gaily, though remorse tugged at her heart-strings every time she glanced at Don Carara, who was standing so patiently at her side.

"Nellie, father wants you!" said Charley, penetrating the circle.

"Let me take you to him," pleaded Don Carara.

She was going to refuse, but could not have the heart to, his tone was so eager. Don Carara's eyes sparkled, and there was that in them, that looked like exultation, as Nellie's hand rested on his arm. Clemancy from behind the curtain muttered discontentedly:

"It won't come to no good."

"Nellie, we want a song," said the Judge.

She took her seat by the harp. In an instant there was perfect silence in that gay throng. The sentence was left unfinished; the laugh checked; every ear lent its homage to that wild gush of melody. Every ear, did we say? aye, the heart prompted the ear. That light, rippling music; that deep, powerful music, so full of pathos, so full of passion, that it touched the hearts of the apparently heartless; brought tears to sparkling eyes; made ruby lips quiver, and bent the heads of strong men in awe that such great sweetness lingered on the earth.

The last note floated over the silent throng, and all were breathless as if to catch it as it died. Nellie, in the silence, raised her eyes. What did she see to cause that start, those flushing cheeks, and sparkling eyes? Mr. Hartley stood in the open doorway, his eyes fixed upon her, and admiration in every lineament of his face. She heeded not the praises they were showering upon her, or their cries of "encore." Her

all-absorbing thought was, "He has heard me sing without asking." Another moment, and he stood by her side, saying in a low tone,

"Have you no word of welcome, Nellie?" She arose, giving him her hand. He drew it within his arm, and led her to join the promenaders.

"You will sing for me at Malbrook, Nellie?"

"When you ask me," archly.

There was an amused expression on his face, at her willfulness.

"Have you been home, Mr. Hartley?"

"No; I thought I would come and see you first." She looked pleased.

"Who is that with Nellie Holmes?" queried one young lady of another.

"I wonder! But what a magnificent carriage he has!"

"I wonder if that is Mr. Hartley," thought Clara Hasbrook, glancing curiously at Nellie.

"Sakes! if there ain't hisself! And don't he look as if he thought Miss Nellie mighty pretty? Gracious Peter! but it is bunkum!" said Clemancy, gleefully, behind the scene.

And Don Carara? He was gone.

"You must let me take you to my guardian, Mr. Hartley," said Nellie.

"Well, make the path to him long. I want to ask you some questions."

"Make a circle of the rooms, then, for we left the Judge where you found me."

"Aye! I did not see him. Now tell me how you spent these months."

"In a round of gaieties."

"And have, of course, been very happy," watching her closely.

"Every pleasure has its alloy," evasively.

"Alloy!" looking at her earnestly. She made no answer, whispering to herself, "They are *very* fine eyes!"

Just then, their progress was impeded. Clara Hasbrook stood directly in their way, laughing and talking very gaily with Miss Clifford. Nellie knew it was for the express purpose of attracting her attention, so she paused and said:

"Mr. Hartley, my guardian's daughter, Miss Hasbrook, and Miss Clifford."

Mr. Hartley bowed with a grace that gave no sign of the annoyance he felt at the interruption. Clara smiled as sweetly as only she could, and bade him welcome with charming ease. And then, instead of allowing them to pass on, asked Mr. Hartley some question relative to his journey, and with a quiet determination, so covered with grace that none but Nellie suspected it, opened a conversation. Mr. Hartley found it impossible to leave with politeness. Answering question after question, at length, annoyed beyond endurance, he reminded Nellie that she was taking him to her guardian, bowed to the ladies, and led her off.

"Don Carara's star sets to-night," said Clara, prophetically.

"And how devoted he is to Nellie," said Miss Clifford.

"I don't know; he knows her very well, and is doubtless asking questions about home," said Clara, coolly.

"Very likely."

Neither Mr. Hartley nor Nellie spoke of Clara's action, but once, when Nellie had occasion to mention her name, he raised his eyebrows in a way that was anything but complimentary to that young lady.

Before the evening was over, there was not a lady in the room who did not know who Mr. Hartley was, and who was not "dying" for an introduction. We have said he was not handsome, but his manners possessed such a courtly grace, and there was such a fascination in his face, that you found yourself accusing your eyes of having deceived you, and taking a second glance to see if he really wasn't handsome after all.

That night Nellie's every thought was of Mr. Hartley. Only once she thought of Don Carara, and that was to wonder where he had gone.

## CHAPTER XVII.



FEW evenings after, they were at the opera. Don Carara was, as usual, in Judge Hasbrook's box, by Nellie's side.

Never did he exert such an influence over her as at the opera. There he was, as it were, alone with her; there his soft, Spanish voice accorded harmoniously with the music, and there he wielded his power of fascination, and perfectly encoiled her in the chain he was so dextrously weaving for her. This evening he had exerted himself more than ever. Never had his flow of language been more musical, more beautiful. Nellie sat as if spell-bound.

When the evening was about half over, Mr. Hartley entered the building, and sought Judge Hasbrook's box. Clara had seen him enter, and had changed her seat to one nearer the door. Charley, whose eye nothing ever escaped, saw Mr. Hartley's entrance, and his sister's movements, and whispered to Nellie,

"Take care, Nellie. Mr. Hartley is coming, and men are naturally jealous."

Mr. Hartley's name dispelled Don Carara's charms, and in an instant Nellie was herself again. Don Carara felt the change, and glanced up to see the

cause, just as Nellie, with a soft, bright color in her cheeks, and a glad sparkle in her eyes, gave her hand to Mr. Hartley, Clara Hasbrook's subterfuge having proved unsuccessful, Mr. Hartley having passed her with a simple "Good evening." Charley caught his sister's eye, and winked maliciously; she curled her lip, but made no retort, only keeping her eyes fixed steadily on Mr. Hartley and Nellie.

Nellie seemed to have forgotten Don Carara, who on Mr. Hartley's entrance had turned his face toward the stage, but seeing Mr. Hartley's eyes fixed questioningly on him, she called his attention, and introduced them. As Don Carara turned, and the two gentlemen faced each other, there was a quick glance exchanged; was it recognition? Nellie remembered the glance afterward, and wondered.

Don Carara again turned his attention to the stage. Clara took a seat nearer to Mr. Hartley and Nellie, and opened a perfect volley of questions and petty remarks. Mr. Hartley had little to say. To Nellie, he appeared haughty and reserved. Had she looked a little closer, she would have seen that he was troubled too. But she did not; so his reserve cast a damper over her, and she became cold and unnatural, talking little to any one, and not at all to him.

Clara Hasbrook, however, made up for all deficiencies, talking constantly in the gayest of strains, discussing the music, the performance, and the people, making witty remarks, and spicing her conversation here and there with a quotation. Charley sat by, looking from one to another of the group, seeking to

read their characters, and to define what part in life's drama they were acting. A great trick had Charley Hasbrook of taking notes on life. He was a philosopher in his way. Fred sat next to Nellie—he was always near her—Charley, in his taking notes, had noted *that*, and he had done it with a sigh; for he had seen that his brother's eyes very often rested on her, and that he met the frank, open smile, and glance, she often gave him, with a very kind return; but Charley with his sharp eyes saw that there was a longing, craving expression in them, as though the smile and glance were not enough to satisfy him. None but Charley saw it though, and he kept it close to himself, only loving his brother the more. Fred noticed his increased kindness, and many little attentions, and accepted them gratefully, though he suspected not the cause.

All the long evening Don Carara kept his face toward the stage. Nellie had almost forgotten he was there, so disturbed was she by Mr. Hartley's reserve, and so annoyed with Clara Hasbrook's constant talking.

A little before the performance was over, Don Carara arose to leave. Nellie wondered; it was something very unusual for him to leave her, while he had the slightest excuse for remaining. As he bowed good evening, Mr. Hartley handed him his card, saying, and there was that in his voice sounded like command—

"Let me see you in the morning."

Don Carara bowed assent, a deep, almost cring-

ing bow. That night, Nellie could not sleep, so troubled was she. She did not even go to bed, but sat by the fire with her face in her hands, sat thus until the flames died out, and there were only a few red coals in the dead, white ashes. "She had waited all these long months, and what for? Had Mr. Hartley changed? Or had she been deceived all that long time? Had that wild October storm, in which the very thunder seemed to echo that sorrowful cry, 'not yet! not yet!' been prophetic? Had he never loved her? only trifling with her. And was his coldness to-night intentional, so that he might undeceive her?" Her cheeks burned. "He should not find it necessary to be cold again." There was a rap at her door, and some one spoke her name. It was Charley's voice. She opened it immediately.

"Up and dressed at this time of the night! What the deuce is to pay?" was Charley's astonished exclamation.

"I wasn't sleepy."

"By George! you wasn't, and why not?" looking at her curiously.

"What do you want?" was Nellie's uncivil reply.

"Sure enough! you astonished me so that I forgot what I came for. Aunt Lucet has got a dying fit." Then added in a discontented tone: "It is delightful to be hauled out of a warm bed, just when you have got comfortably asleep, to gratify the whims of a fidgety old woman. I pray the good Lord when I come to die, I may do it quicker than

she has. But why don't you come?" to Nellie, who had scarce heard a word he had said.

Nellie followed him mechanically to the old lady's room. Aunt Lucet was a hypochondriac. Every few weeks she imagined she was going to die, and it was always in the "wee sma' hours o' the night," when every one was asleep, that she was seized with what Charley termed her dying fits. It caused them no little annoyance, for so firmly convinced was she each time, that her last hour had come, that the whole family had to be routed up to receive her blessing. Occasionally, some member of the family would grow rebellious at the disturbance, but the Judge, whose word was law, by one stern rebuke, would crush the rebellious spirit.

Aunt Lucet was his only sister, and absurd as her disease was, he pitied her, knowing that, although her approaching end was purely imaginative, it was as painful as if real; and he not only himself paid perfect deference to what seemed a foolish whim, but made every member of his household follow his example.

When they reached the old lady's room, they found it brilliantly lighted, and the whole family, servants included, gathered about the bed. Aunt Lucet was propped up on pillows; her cap drawn down over her weazened face; her wig, teeth, and spectacles lying on the coverlet by her side; her little withered hands divested of their jewels, crossed on her bosom, and an open Bible in her lap.

Her wrinkled, weazened face wore the tired, un-

mistakable expression of a hypochondriac, but her small bright eyes had a happy expression, as she looked from one to another and noticed that all were present. Near her stood the Judge, his kind face full of sympathy, though a close observer might have seen that there was a smile hidden somewhere about the mouth, for he had a keen sense of the ludicrous, and this oft-repeated death-bed scene would have tried the most rigid risibles. Then came Fred with his gentle, manly face; then Clara, with a sneer dilating her nostrils; Nellie, showing very plainly that her thoughts were not there; Charley, cross and surly; then the line of servants, ranged according to their respective ages, beginning with Luke, the black coachman, and ending with little Top, who stood rubbing his big eyes, and every now and then snickering out his "he! he! he!" to be corrected by the Judge shaking his forefinger threateningly at him, and crying "Sh!" When the old lady had glanced from one to another, looking them each in the face a few seconds, she said in a solemn tone:

"This is the way to die, with one's family about them." Then, beginning with the Judge, she gave them each a piece of advice and her blessing. This proceeding being finished, the Judge sang the doxology in his cracked voice, the old lady joining in the "amen;" while Charley whispered in Nellie's ear, "Thank the saints the programme is nearly ended! now for the tea." Just then a servant, who had slipped out during the doxology, entered with a

cup of strong green tea. The Judge handed it to her. She took a sip and remarked:

"I feel better;" then another sip, and again, "I feel better;" then another, and another, each time repeating the assertion as to the state of her health. At length the last drop was swallowed, and sitting upright in the bed, she exclaimed in a gratified tone, "I thank the Lord that I am better. I shall not die to-night. Charley, the backgammon board." The Bible was laid aside, her favorite game filled its place; the dice box began its rattle, while one member of the family after another, beginning with the Judge and ending with Top, silently left the room.



## CHAPTER XVIII.



NOTHER party! People seemed to be going daft upon the subject. The wealthy and fashionable were trying to outdo each other in the costliness and magnificence of their entertainments.

Beauty had spent hours adorning herself for to-night. And why? Mr. Hartley was to be there. Already he had become the greatest of favorites. The ladies raved over his fascinations, and even the gentlemen were loud in his praises. There was a whisper afloat that at last the cause of Nellie Holmes's coldness to the Spaniard was discovered. She doubtless loved Mr. Hartley, the wealthy lord of Malbrook, and now the question was, "Did he love her?" At first every one agreed in saying he did, but lately they were beginning to have some doubt on the subject. No one could tell exactly *why* he doubted it, for he was attentive to her, but each remembered having heard Clara Hasbrook intimate something to that effect, and surely Clara Hasbrook *ought* to know; she was the daughter of Nellie's guardian."

The world had fixed its eyes very closely on Nellie Holmes and Mr. Hartley, and was watching their every look and movement.

They said that Nellie changed color whenever Mr.

Hartley approached her; and they said he watched her very closely, even when not with her, and it was whispered that he was jealous of the Spaniard, for he grew stern and proud in his looks, and treated Nellie with coldness when Don Carara was by.

They said that he had met the Spaniard in his travels, and that there was an enmity between them. They said, too, that lately Mr. Hartley treated Nellie with indifference, giving more attention to other ladies than to her; and it was thought that some day Clara Hasbrook would prove a successful rival; for they said he went to the Judge's every night, and that *Clara* entertained him.

Dame Gossip, they tell me you live in country towns. Do you never take a trip into the city? Am I wrong in suspecting that you spend your winters there?

Nellie heard all these rumors—heard how it was said that Mr. Hartley neglected her, and that she felt the neglect, and her resolution was, that though he *did* neglect her, though she *was* more hurt than she would acknowledge even to herself, the world should no longer have cause to say so.

So Nellie grew to be a sad flirt, giving smiles to those on whom she had never bestowed them before, and rejecting suitor after suitor.

But all this while she gave neither smile nor word to Don Carara.

Mr. Hartley paid no heed to all that was going on; he did not seem to care whether people talked about him or not, in fact did not seem to know they were



talking about him. He did not seem to see how Nellie coquetted; treated her when they met with his usual courtly grace, but did not seek her any more; only one thing seemed to have power to annoy him, and that was seeing her with Don Carara.

Nellie noticed *that*, and wondered; but for all her wish to annoy him, for all her flirting, she had not yet flirted with Don Carara; she had that to do yet.

But we were talking of this party for which Beauty had taken such pains to array herself; this party at which every belle meant to have at least one dance with Mr. Hartley. But alas! how many were doomed to disappointment.

When Mr. Hartley entered the room, Clara Hasbrook leant upon his arm. Never had Nellie flirted, never coqueted as she did that evening. She was lavish of her favors, and whenever not dancing was surrounded by admirers. She did not cast a single glance at Mr. Hartley; her good evening to him was a cold, haughty one. She knew full well that Clara Hasbrook and the world were watching her. Constantly she refused to dance with Don Carara, and all the long evening he stood apart by himself.

But at length his face assumed a determined expression, and coming up to where Nellie was standing for a moment's rest, he said—

"Nellie, you have put me off the entire evening with promises; you shall not do it again;" and before she could refuse, he had drawn her hand within his arm, and led her to the head of one of the sets.

Mr. Hartley and Clara Hasbrook were talking earnestly in one of the recesses a little apart from the dancers. Nellie saw Mr. Hartley glance at her with that same annoyed expression she had often noted, and wondered at, as Don Carara led her to the dance, and with a feeling of exultation that she had power to trouble him, she devoted herself to the Spaniard.

She did not mean to be cruel; she did not mean to coquet; but the consciousness that both those apparently earnest talkers occasionally glanced at her, impelled her to it. But she *was* cruel; those flushing cheeks, and sparkling eyes, and bewitching tosses of the head, deceived Don Carara, and his dark eyes beamed lustroously with hope. He thought she had been coquetting all the evening. He seemed wild with joy. Never had he been so beautiful, never so graceful. At every smile that dropped from Nellie's ruby lips, his step grew lighter, and his face more radiant. Cruel, cruel Nellie!

But as the dance wore on, and the charms of his conversation gathered about her, unconsciously she yielded to his fascinations, thinking less and less of those two earnest talkers, those watchers of hers.

"Aye! Nellie, it is a dangerous game. Beware! beware! you may not always be winner.

The hours danced gaily by, keeping time to the music. And that dance was ended, and another, and another, and Nellie forgot to refuse, and Don Carara to entreat, only keeping on, impelled as it were by the music. They seemed to have forgotten their

surroundings; forgotten even those in their own set; forgotten everything; remembering nothing but themselves. Nellie lost her powers of resistance; lost all desire to resist; lost as it were her own identity; yielded as completely to her charmer, as does the bird, who leaves off his merry warbling; leaves its pretty nest far up in the leafy branch; leaves the blue sky and golden sunshine, and, forced by an irresistible power, draws nearer and nearer to the fascinating eyes of the coiled snake. Nellie, Nellie! did you not hear us say beware? Heed the warning Nellie, heed it well! Still those two talkers were as earnest as ever; still those two watchers watched, and as the dances flowed one into another, the eyes of one grew anxious, then stern, and sad. the eyes of the other steely and envious and gleaming with a purpose, that the will vowed it *would* accomplish. One of those watchers little suspected that his companion was looking at him intently, and noting every glance he cast upon the two dancers; little suspected that she with whom he was so earnestly talking was trying to read him and thought she had succeeded.

Manœuverers are almost always baffled, and to him who worketh ill, evil will return.

"Don Carara is successful. Nellie is a captive," said Clara, insinuatingly, looking the while searchingly at Mr. Hartley. He concealed the troubled look, and said carelessly:

"Do you think so?"

She looked puzzled, but as though bound on knowing the truth, said:

"Nellie is rather pretty, and takes *quite* well with our city gentlemen. It is a wonder she did not succeed in captivating you."

"Maybe she did not try," coolly.

She looked into his face to see if she dare venture any further; it was cold and forbidding, but her iron will could not be conquered.

"Perhaps she *did* succeed."

She *had* gone too far, she had stepped beyond the limits; his face was freezing, and the hauteur in his eyes, and about his mouth, made her cheeks tingle. Just then Mr. Phips asked her to dance, and a moment after Mr. Hartley joined the promenaders with Miss Clifford.

Poor Phips! your little stock of brains would have been annihilated, had you for one moment suspected the anathemas your smiling companion was hurling on your unconscious, empty head.

She was baffled at last; she had found her master, and the moment she found him, she yielded her *heart*, though not her *will*, up to him. "Should she love in vain?—she, the wealthy, accomplished Clara Hasbrook? No, never! She would not leave a scheme untried, nor a stone unturned; succeed she would, at no matter what cost. He loved Nellie, or at least fancied he did, and it was as plain as moonshine," that she loved him. But she would play her cards well. Nellie would be easily deceived, and this very night had shown what jealousy would goad

her to. She should marry Don Carara, and then Mr. Hartley would be hers. *Mrs. Hartley of Malbrook*—it sounded well; she liked the title. She had ventured too far to-night, she feared he had read her, but she could easily have retrieved it all, if it had not been for that abominable Phips. She wished he had been in Egypt, or that the half a grain of sense he possessed, had never been given him." And all this while those two dancers danced on, their step growing lighter, and lighter, knowing no weariness, one of them having entirely forgotten her two watchers. Do we say *two*? Aye, there was a *third*. Every now and then one would draw away from the others apart by himself, and with paling cheeks, and sad eyes, would watch one of the radiant dancers.

"Fred! Fred! It is as Charley said, the winter is showing."

"And Charley! Where is he, all this long evening?" Flitting about, one minute here, the next there, every now and then looking angrily at Nellie, and more angrily at his sister, until he saw Mr. Hartley coldly leave her side; then an exulting smile flitted over his face, and turning to Aunt Lucet, who sat near him, he told her "that she looked remarkably well to-night." The old lady smiled in a very gratified manner.

"Why are you not oftener *kind*, Charley Hasbrook? Surely it is nobler to call a gleam of pleasure to that old lady's face, than a flash of anger. It is strange the world guards so close its pleasant words, and is so stingy of kindness."

More gaily skip the hours; old Time's children are merry to-night.

Now those two dancers have left off dancing and joined the promenaders. Again and again they make the circle of the rooms. Closer and closer winds the spell, and now they have left the gay saloon, and passed into the conservatory, with its beauteous flowers, reminding man that Art has not yet vanquished Nature.

Nellie, have you not heard our warning? Will you not heed it?

Quicker and quicker gather the charms, more and more she yields; another moment *all* will be lost!

Nellie, again we cry beware!

He holds her unresisting hand; she gazes fascinated, into those great dark eyes. They change, those lustrous, restless eyes, or else another pair have come between them and hers. A pair of sorrowful, drooping eyes, looking pleadingly into hers. Is it the counter-charm? She starts shuddering, and snatches away her hand. The spell is broken. She glances up; Fred stands a short distance from her; in a moment she is at his side.

"Fred, take me from here; the perfume of the flowers makes me sick. I want air."

And the Charmer? One shudders at the expression on his voluptuous Spanish face.

## CHAPTER XIX.



HE next morning Nellie was very much depressed and troubled. Never before had she known how great was the power Don Carara could exert over her. Bitterly did she repent the little art of coquetry that had drawn her so completely under his influence. She shuddered at the recollection of her strange infatuation. She remembered how she had recoiled even as she yielded. She dreaded meeting him again. She would never allow herself to be with him alone again even for a minute. She would keep near Fred; she could *trust him* even if she couldn't trust any one else, and there was a tear in her eye. She went over and stood at the window. There had been a heavy snow-storm the night before, and to-day the streets were full of sleighs. It was a gay scene Nellie's eyes rested on, very little in accordance with her own feelings, but as she looked on the merriment and life beneath, she in a measure forgot her troubles, and longed to mingle with the excitement. "She wished Fred would take her a ride. She wouldn't go with any one else."

Wouldn't you, Nellie? Not with *any one else*?

At length she grew tired wishing and watching;

she turned disconsolately from the window, and taking a novel, half buried herself in the cushions of an easy-chair; but soon tiring of the novel, went to sleep and dreamed of sleigh-riding.

There was a low tap at the door. A knock is very characteristic, and this one, low, lingering, and yet decided, as if done with the tips of the fingers, woke Nellie on the spot; she needed no one to tell her who was seeking admittance, and her summons to come in was given coolly, and in the reserved tone in which she was accustomed to address her guardian's daughter.

Clara came in and leaned over Nellie's chair, so that she could see her face. She had a great way of looking into people's faces when talking to them—a searching way, as if seeking to read their thoughts.

"What have you been doing with yourself since breakfast we haven't seen anything of you."

Nellie yawned slightly, and replied:

"I have been reading, and sleeping, by turns."

"What have you been reading?" at the same time picking up the open book from Nellie's lap.

"Ah! the new novel I heard Shelbourne telling you of last evening; he was prompt in sending it. But that reminds me; how would you like a sleigh-ride?"

"Ever so much; I have been sighing for one all day."

"Well, your longing is satisfied, for Don Carara was here a few moments ago, asking very earnestly for you. I told him you had not been visible since

breakfast, and asked if I might deliver the message, which proved an invitation. I took the liberty of accepting it for you, as I knew you would of course be delighted to go," insinuatingly.

Nellie's eyes flashed. She was on the point of replying, but Clara hindered her by saying, indifferently:

"Mr. Hartley sent an invitation for us both, a few minutes after; I accepted, but told him you had engaged to ride with Don Carara."

Nellie's cheeks flushed; her lip curled.

"I don't see what right you have either to accept or decline an invitation for me. Of course I shall not go with Don Carara. In the future I should like the privilege of deciding for myself." Clara's face was the picture of astonishment.

"Not prefer going with Don Carara? Why, I thought of course you would rather ride with him than any one else." Nellie deigned no reply, while Clara continued, coolly:

"The mistake can be very easily rectified: you can refuse Don Carara, and go with Mr. Hartley and me."

Nellie replied haughtily, "That she should not go at all," and sat impatiently tapping her foot on the carpet. Clara's face fairly beamed, for she had accomplished her design.

There was the clear ringing of sleigh bells for a moment, then they stopped. Clara sprang to the window."

"Here he is, this moment; I am sorry you cannot

go, Nellie. I will explain to Mr. Hartley," and she skipped lightly from the room. Nellie went to the window, disappointment and anger flushing her face, and peeped from behind the rich drapery. There was Mr. Hartley, with his handsome sleigh, his magnificent horses, pawing the dazzling snow, and shaking their flowing manes, impatient to be off. In a moment they were gone, and she could hear Clara's laugh mingling with the ringing of the bells. She left the window, and throwing herself on the bed, cried from sheer disappointment. It was so unkind! She had been longing for a ride all day. How could she? And it was so impudent! How dare she do such a thing? And Don Carara! he would be there in a moment. What should she do? She would not, dare not, go with him; she hated his very name.

There was another knock at her door. She dried her eyes, and half drawing the curtains of the bed to prevent being seen, said, "Come in." Clemency entered, coming up to the side of the bed, and saying—

"Duke gave me this, and says Don Carara's sleigh is at the door," handing Nellie a note.

She opened it. It was wild and passionate as himself, telling of his utter desolation since she had so strangely and so coldly left him last night, and pleading her to ride with him. She looked troubled; what should she do? Clemency, who was earnestly regarding her, said:

"If he wants you to go sleigh-riding, I wouldn't do

it, Miss Nellie, for you look sick. I'm sure you are tired, and have got the headache like. May I go and say you'll be excused?"

"Yes, do, Clemancy," in a relieved tone.

Clemancy started off, pleased with the errand, and muttering, "It's a 'pretty how come you so,' if Miss Clara Hasbrook—the hippercrit—has got to go off with Mr. Hartley, and leave Miss Nellie for that man of Spain. He hasn't a Christian look out of his big eyes, noways. I shouldn't wonder if he was a heathen, or a Jew, or something of that sort, and I have a moral conviction in my mind, that it won't come to no good. He is as bad as Lucifer, I'm sure! and that Clara Hasbrook is just fit to be the old Nick's wife; and the two together will work mischief."

When she delivered her message, Don Carara's eyes flashed, and he set his full, voluptuous lips together in a way that confirmed Clemancy's poor opinion.

"Tell Miss Holmes I *must* see her a moment, just *one*."

"You cannot, sir. Her head aches, and it is trying to get a bit of sleep she is," decidedly.

"You did not tell me that before. I am so sorry! Will you tell her so?" with a yearning, pleading expression in his heavily-shaded, lustrous eyes.

Clemancy half yielded to their charm, and concluded that perhaps he wasn't a heathen or a Jew after all, and said she would tell her. But on the way back to Nellie's room, she remembered how he

had set his lips together, and went back to her former opinion, saying to her self, "That he hadn't no such a mouth as Mr. Hartley, and sakes! he had ne'er a hair on his upper lip!"

That evening both Mr. Hartley and Don Carara spent at Judge Hasbrook's. Mr. Hartley gave Nellie no opportunity to thank him for his invitation, devoting himself completely to Clara Hasbrook. None ever understood playing the agreeable better than she. Her conversational powers were excellent; she had traveled considerably; was well read in the popular works of the time, and had the knack of making a little knowledge go a great way. And then she was the best of listeners, and there is not a man under the blue canopy, whom it does not flatter to be well listened to. She would sit with her head slightly bent forward, her lips just a little parted, her eyes raised to his face, excepting when his were bent on her, then drooping most modestly, her whole soul apparently wrapt in what he was saying. Oh woman! who can equal you in deception? Who would ever have dreamt, looking at Clara Hasbrook's interested face, that that position, that wrapt expression, the very drooping of the eyes, had been practised before the mirror? And who would have suspected that for all her attentive appearance, she was taking in every object in the room; seeing every action of Nellie's, watching her every movement. Saw her as the night before, first cold and distant to Don Carara, then piqued at Mr. Hartley's neglect, turn and smile upon him. She



had, as it were, a double mind, each playing its own game, and both converging by different routes to the same end. We have said Clara saw Nellie smile upon Don Carara. At first, she treated him distantly, but when Mr. Hartley failed to address her after his formal "Good evening," she, as the night before, grew reckless.

She would not let him see that he had power to annoy her; she forgot last night's bitter experience; forgot her morning's resolutions. Her whole object was to show Mr. Hartley her indifference, and she felt, she knew not why, that she could annoy him in no way so much, as in showing her preference for Don Carara. So, though Fred sat beside her, she scarce gave him a glance. She did not see that his brow was clouded, and that though smiles played on his kind face, there was a touch of sadness in them. Charley saw it though, and sighed, muttering, "I thought as much." Then went over to where Aunt Lucet sat, with the Christian determination of forgetting all about it in teasing her.

But it is not easy to forget disagreeable, troubling things. Charley forgot all about teasing Aunt Lucet, and sat moodily watching, first Nellie and his brother, then his sister and Mr. Hartley, and had one penetrated his gloomy exterior, and looked into his mind, they would have heard his thoughts saying: "These women cause a deal of misery, and sometimes suffer a deal too." And then he would glance sympathizingly at Nellie, as though he sus-

pected her smiles covered an ache somewhere down in her heart.

That evening, before Don Carara left, Nellie had promised to ride with him on the morrow, should the sleighing remain good.

Her good night to Mr. Hartley was a very cold one. She was unsuspecting by nature, and it had never occurred to her that Clara might have delivered her excuse to him any way but right. She little knew how much one insinuating word or look could do, or how much meaning a little laugh could convey. There is nothing that does more mischief than insinuation. It carries with it so much the appearance of truth, *says* so little, leaves one to *infer* so much.

Nellie never suspected that she could have done anything so much to her own disadvantage, as flirting with Don Carara that evening. It was just what Clara Hasbrook wished.

## CHAPTER XX.

**T**HE next day Nellie rode with Don Carara, and the sleighing remaining fine, rode the next, and yet the next day, and in each of those three rides did she encounter Clara Hasbrook and Mr. Hartley in that gentleman's handsome cutter.

Each time she returned their salutations coldly, and pretended not to hear the sweet little words with a sting in them, that Clara Hasbrook sent flying after her. The world looked on, and wondered, saying that "Nellie Holmes had changed her tune." If she had, to her it was a sorrowful one she was singing.

She felt that she had satisfied the world, that she did not feel Mr. Hartley's neglect; her whole object now, was to show Mr. Hartley that she did not feel it, and not to let Clara Hasbrook see that she was slighted.

The evening after her third sleigh-ride, she and Clara and Aunt Lucet were in the drawing-room. It was early yet, and they were alone. The room was very quiet; Nellie and Clara were reading; there was nothing to tell the ear that the room was inhabited, save the monotonous throw of the dice, and Aunt Lucet's occasional low chuckle when she had succeeded in beating herself. At length Clara

threw herself back in her chair, and yawning, exclaimed:

"How insufferably stupid! I wonder where every one is."

"What an air, sis! You had better held out a little longer, and you might be repaid. Your attitude was the perfection of studied carelessness," said Charley, entering the room. He had evidently been standing for some time in the doorway.

Clara deigned no reply, excepting a curl of the lip.

"Humph! a most beautiful picture of scorn," continued Charley, provokingly. This was more than Clara could bear. Looking at him angrily, she exclaimed:

"You had better stop your impudence, sir, or I'll tell father."

"Ain't you ashamed of yourself, Charley Hasbrook!" joined in Aunt Lucet, ever ready to take part with anybody, against Charley. "Ain't you ashamed of yourself, to treat your sister and elder in such a manner. If you go on in this way, pray what will you do when you come to die?"

"What will I do when I come to die? Why, do as you do, Aunt Lucet? Take a cup of tea," replied Charley, maliciously.

Aunt Lucet's face was the picture of rage at this speech, while she exclaimed:

"You impudent, saucy lad!"

Charley saw he had gone too far. But teasing was so completely a part of his nature, that he was scarce happy, except when tormenting some one.



So, as if to give his aunt time to recruit, he turned his artillery on his sister.

"Well, sis, on the whole, you look quite prink, this evening. Prink enough for an old maid; and that position, with just the tip of your slipper showing! Oh, you women beat the very deuce! Who were you expecting to come and see you in all you maiden loveliness? Mr. Hartley? Eh?"

No answer.

"Well, sis, allow me to inform you that you are exceedingly foolish. Mr. Hartley don't care that for you!" snapping his fingers. Clara's face was livid, while Charley continued, provokingly: "I acknowledge it is not very comfortable, but then, the truth is very often anything but pleasant. But it is truth, 'for a' that.'"

Clara seemed too angry to speak.

"Oh my! what an entertaining set," continued he; "I wonder if you will all be as mum a half an hour hence, when callers begin to come. Hurrah! Aunt Lucet, swallowed your tongue?" shouted he, over to the old lady, who had returned to the backgammon.

"Hold *your* tongue, you bad, saucy fellow!" retorted she.

"Bravo! Aunt Lucet, '*tauriculus tibi*,'" cried Charley, clapping his hands and laughing.

"Stop your Latining, you wicked lad! And you stop your giggling," turning angrily toward Nellie, who, try her best, could not help laughing at the old lady's ridiculous anger, and Charley's Latin.

"It is a pity if a fellow has got to hold his tongue all his days!" exclaimed Charley.

"I wonder what sort of a scholar I am going to make, if I can't practice my Latin out of school once in a while. We won't be such martyrs, will we, Nellie? and you shall giggle just as much as you choose, so you shall," patting Nellie under the chin.

"Oh, yes! spoil her, make her just as bad as you are yourself, and then you'll feel happy when you come to die, won't you?" said Aunt Lucet, satirically.

"Go it, aunt! your satire and temper will soon be at a ratio," said Charley, encouragingly.

"Smart little brother, been to school too, hasn't he?" joined in Clara, sarcastically.

"Bless our angel, if she hasn't found her tongue! But I would suggest a sweeter tone. Mr. Hartley might come along, and think the little one was a spit-fire."

Clara looked very angry, but acted on Charley's suggestion, or rather stopped talking altogether. while Nellie grew sober; for absurd as they sometimes were, these frequent bickerings were annoying.

Charley finding it impossible again to bring his sister into the field, renewed his attack upon Aunt Lucet, by going over and upsetting her game, which was in full force and near its termination. This was too much for the little old lady; her weazened face grew scarlet; she raised her small jeweled hand, and Charley, not expecting it, received a smart box on the ear.

"*O miserere!*" groaned he, in mock agony.

"Served you right, you sinful lad! Stop your screeching Latin at me. I wonder what you'll do when you come to die?" ending with the usual question, and too excited to say any more.

"Charles Hasbrook!" said a stern voice behind them.

Charley startled, and faced about, then exclaimed in a relieved tone;

"*O optime frater*, is it only you? I thought it was the old gentleman."

"For shame, Charley! if you haven't any respect for others, I should think you would have a little for yourself."

"Not so fast, brother; it would be impossible for me to respect myself and not others, for you know Shakespeare says—"To thine own self be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man."

There was a smile on Fred's kind face as he replied:

"You are almost as ready with an answer as Lear's fool; but it would be well did you follow Polonius's advice."

"Say, brother, did Laertes? I have forgotten," questioned Charley.

"What on earth are you talking about?" asked Aunt Lucet, in amazement, her knowledge of Shakespeare being chiefly confined to its cover.

"Of a man who once gave his son a very excellent piece of advice," replied Fred, drawing a chair to her

side. It was pretty, after her former rage, to see the love and admiration depicted in the old lady's face, as she looked at Fred.

"What was that gentleman's name who gave his son the advice, Fred? Do I know him?" asked Aunt Lucet.

"Oh yes, you know him well! he lives just around the corner; said Charley gravely, before Fred had time to reply.

"What did you say his name was, Fred?" not condescending to look at Charley, but feeling curious on the subject.

"Polonius," not giving his brother a chance to explain.

"Mr. Polonius! I don't recollect the name, Fred," still addressing Fred, but in reality all the while talking to Charley.

"Ah! that is strange! His son goes to college and is a great chum of mine," continued Charley, with the greatest appearance of truth.

Nellie was swallowing a laugh; Clara sneering, and Fred grave almost to seriousness.

"What did you say his son's name was, Fred?" continued the old lady.

"Laertes; we nickname him Lat at school, because he talks Latin so like the deuce," replied Charley, with a wicked wink.

"His father had better beat him then, beat him until he was 'most dead. Don't you think so, Fred?"

"Undoubtedly. If you had a son, and he talked

Latin, you'd beat him until he was 'most dead, wouldn't you aunt?"

"Wouldn't I? I'd beat him quite dead, wouldn't I, Fred?" very excitedly.

"Well, then, your son that *isn't*, ought to thank the Lord very heartily, that he never *was*. Don't you think so, aunt?"

"Who are you talking to, you saucy lad?" cried Aunt Lucet, facing about.

"It wasn't me, it was Fred," said Charley, innocently.

"You don't tell what is true; you'll get punished for it; you won't go to heaven, *never*, you'll go where its as hot as—as"—

"Ginger!" said Charley, helping her to a word.

The old lady fairly trembled with rage. Fred looked distressed, Nellie annoyed, and Clara, judging from her livid face and parted lips, had burnished her arms, and was about re-entering the field.

Just at this crisis, Luke ushered in Mr. Clifford and Mr. Phips, and a little after Shelbourne and the Judge came in for their evening discussion. The two were very fond of arguing.

Then came the Spaniard, and Clara's face took the sweetest and most expectant of expressions, waiting for Mr. Hartley. Charley had drawn a chair close beside Nellie, ready to take notes for his life journal. Don Carara sat at her other side. Clifford was close by, and Nellie was doing most of her talking to him. The world had noticed that she did more talking to Don Carara when Mr. Hartley was by, than at any

other time. Fred staid by his aunt, and Clara was talking to Phips until Mr. Hartley should come; Poor simple Phips, whom everybody was obliged to endure, because he had such a very rich father.

Presently Mr. Hartley came, and Clara, in her determined way, all covered with grace, invited him to *tête-à-tête*, as she said she had something to tell him. Of course he could not politely refuse, so he only bowed to the others, and though Nellie for one moment met his glance, she did not discover the annoyance and trouble in his eyes, though she did see that his bow to Don Carara was a proud, reserved one.

Phips, with the intuitive knowledge even the most ignorant have when they are not wanted, left Clara and joined the group about Nellie. Charley greeted him with—

"Well, Phips, what made you beat such a hasty retreat?"

"Three isn't company. Besides, I haven't seen anything of Miss Holmes yet," with an excruciating glance at Nellie. It was thrown away, however, for Nellie now was taken up with Don Carara. She cast no glance at Mr. Hartley, scarce looked at Clifford, but devoted her entire attention to the Spaniard.

Charley took the entertaining of Phips into his own hands, and there was a twinkle in his eye that said plainly as words could, that he meant to have some sport at the young man's expense.

So after they had talked a little, he asked,

"How long is it since you left college, Phips?"

"Well, a—let me see," said Phips, meditatively. "I'm twenty-eight now, and I left six years ago. That would make me a"—

"Twenty-four," said Charley, quickly.

"Would it, now? Why, I was thinking I wasn't so old;" then, after meditating a moment,

"Why, no, Charley, six from eight leaves two. I was twenty-two. It struck me I was not so old as you were making out."

"Why, neither you were; I beg pardon for the mistake. I shall have to rub up my Arithmetic a little. Who was your hero when you were in college, Phips? Whom of all the great men you studied about, did you admire most?"

Phips looked puzzled, while Clifford, who had been listening, cruelly joined in with Charley, and said "It was Hannibal, wasn't it? It strikes me I used to hear you say so."

Phips was more puzzled than ever; he had never heard of such a being; that, Clifford knew right well when he asked the question.

"Who did you say, Clifford?" asked he, in wonderment.

"Cyrus, wasn't he your favorite?" said Clifford, wickedly.

"Why, a—no," replied Phips, stroking his moustache.

Ah! Phips, you have gotten into hard quarters.

Full three quarters of an hour did Clifford and Charley keep the poor brainless fellow on the rack,


attacking him mercilessly on one side, and another, until he scarcely knew where he was. After a while he grew desperate—that is desperate as was in his power—and suddenly springing up, went over and took his seat by Clara again.

Aunt Lucet was sitting all alone, playing her solitary game. Mr. Shelbourne, having failed in his argument, had called Fred to his rescue. A little after Phips joined Clara, Mr. Hartley went over to Aunt Lucet, and with his courtly grace begged the pleasure of being her opponent. The old lady's face gleamed with surprise and delight. She was so pleased and flattered at the attention, that her head was completely turned. More than one pair of eyes followed Mr. Hartley as he did that little gentlemanly act—eyes that said very plainly, "What will he do next?" Nellie alone showed no astonishment, but there was a very pleased smile about her lips. Charley whispered in her ear:

"'Mirabile visu!' our beautiful angel deserted for an old woman;" then added, mentally,

"There is a lesson for you, Charley Hasbrook." and straightway noted down the act in his life journal.

## CHAPTER XXI

ISS CLIFFORD and Nellie and Clara were sitting in the latter young lady's boudoir one morning. Miss Clifford was teaching Clara a new stitch in crocheting, and the two were doing most of the talking, such talking it was, as two women generally have over such work.

"Mr. Hartley called on me last night, Clara," said Miss Clifford.

"Did he?" asked Clara, in the conscious tone she had lately assumed whenever Mr. Hartley was the subject of conversation.

"Yes, and I think him more fascinating than ever."

"Do you?" with a little gratified laugh. Clara Hasbrook's little laughs implied a great deal.

"What do you think I told him?"

"Tell me quick, I am dying to know," with very pretty curiosity.

"I told him I had heard a wee bit of gossip about him." Clara blushed, while she asked eagerly, at the same time casting a glance at Nellie, who was busily embroidering, and apparently taking no interest in the conversation:

"And what did he say to that?"

"Why, he gave one of those funny looks, that infatuate everybody, and turn one so completely around, that you don't know whether he means what he says or not, and said that gossip was not noted for truthfulness."

Clara looked a little disappointed, while Miss Clifford continued:

"Then I asked why he did not inquire what I had heard, but he did not seem to have any intention to, so I told him."

"And what did you tell him?" asked Clara, with apparent embarrassment.

"Why, that I had heard that he had sought and won the hand of—— I will spare your blushes," with a gay laugh.

"And what did he say then?" asked Clara, dropping her eyes, but not contradicting the report.

"Why, that is the provoking part of it. He replied in French, and I couldn't understand a word he said; for you know his pronunciation is so perfect while ours is so poor." Clara looked as if she did not quite relish the compliment in the latter part of her remark.

"Can't you remember what he said?"

"Not one word. I had a good notion to ask him to repeat it, but hated to display my ignorance."

"How provoking!" in a disappointed tone.

"Just hear that, Nellie!" exclaimed Miss Clifford, laughing.

"I tell you, Clara, that is too good to be lost. I

shall tell Mr. Hartley how disappointed you were, and get him to repeat it for your benefit the very next time I see him."

"You shall do no such thing; if you do, I will never speak to you again," with ill feigned displeasure.

"Yes, I will."

"If you do!" threateningly, but with smiles all over her face.

"And I have heard something about you too, Nellie," said Miss Clifford, looking over to where Nellie sat.

"Indeed!" said Nellie, without even so much as glancing at her.

"Don't you want to know what it is?"

"No," coolly.

"Well, if that isn't wonderful. You really don't care to know?" in astonishment.

"I really don't."

"Then you are the most remarkable girl I ever knew. Frank is always talking against woman's curiosity; I shall tell him you have none, and he will admire you more than ever."

"You had better not tell your brother, it might cause mischief," said Clara, gleefully.

"How so?" asked Miss Clifford.

"How? ask Don Carara," replied Clara, insinuatingly.

Nellie maintained a haughty silence.

"Don Carara! that brings me back to my gossip," exclaimed Miss Clifford. Just then there was

a rap at the door, and Clara, opening it, discovered Top standing in the doorway. He was so terrified at the sight of her, that he stood perfectly mute, rolling his eyes wildly, as if he imagined himself yet entangled in a ball of yarn, and evidently having forgotten his errand, but catching sight of Nellie he recovered his courage sufficiently to speak.

"Massa wants *you*," indicating with his finger who *you* meant.

"Wants me, Top?" asked Nellie.

"Yah."

"Where is he?" but the little darkey having delivered his message, had "taken to his heels" as if anxious to be clear of the dreaded presence.

Nellie, glad of relief from the impending disagreeable conversation, followed the retreating form of the frightened darkey. He paused before the door of the library and turned to see if Nellie was coming. When he saw her he pitched a congratulatory somerset, and entered the room. Nellie found the Judge reading the paper. He laid it aside on her entrance, and calling her to him, drew her down on his knee, then, without saying anything, placed two highly scented notes before her. She read them, and tossed them on the table close by, without any comment.

"Well, what am I to say to the young men?" asked the Judge.

"Why, I am sorry, but"—

"Sorry! Humph! the old story. I have got to smash their circulatory organs, have I," grumbled the

Judge, good-humoredly interrupting her. Nellie laughed.

"Break their hearts! Do you think they have any?"

"Undoubtedly. Even chickens possess the article, but I shan't answer for the size of them, or the quality;" then adding, with mock fierceness:

"How many more notes of this kind have I got to answer, Miss Holmes?"


"Can't say."

"Can't? can't you? I will tell you, it is no pleasant job to be the guardian of a rich and pretty girl. By the time you're off my hands, half the young men in the city will be ready to shoot me."

"*Rich and pretty!*" She might have been as beautiful as Venus, and had she been penniless, beauty would have been of little account; but had she been ever so unprepossessing and *rich*, suitors would have fought for her hand. Gold! gold! is all the cry. Nine tenths of the world are on bended knee to mammon.

Nellie did not go back to Clara's boudoir; she was tired of gossip; tired of gaiety; almost tired of living.

## CHAPTER XXII.

LMOST every evening Mr. Hartley and Don Carara spent at Judge Hasbrook's, and each of these evenings Nellie devoted herself to the Spaniard, giving neither word nor glance to any one else. Don Carara's life seemed perfect bliss. He was ever at her side, drinking in her smiles as the flowers drink the sunshine, and living by them. Undisguised adoration marked every lineament of his dark brilliant face, and bright smiles ever parted his full ruby lips.

And Nellie, with her gay sparkling manner covering her restless aching heart, one could not but pity her, though she was in a great measure making her own unhappiness.

Every evening Clara Hasbrook became more and more entertaining, and Mr. Hartley evidently enjoyed his evenings, else why did he come so often? Clara was beginning to feel very sure of her ground, and had taken to drooping her eyes, and blushing very prettily, whenever his name was the subject of conversation.

Very often in the course of an evening, she would glance over to where Nellie and Don Carara sat, and say, in that tone she knew so well how to assume, so full of gentle insinuation, and commiserating kindness:



"Ah! Nellie, has at length bid farewell to freedom; bid farewell to coquetry: You will miss her at Malbrook, Mr. Hartley," and then Mr. Hartley would look very proud and reserved, and for the next five minutes Clara would be obliged to sustain the conversation alone. He and Nellie might have been strangers for all the intercourse they had, only a distant bow on her part, and a cold graceful one on his.

Each evening, whether at places of amusement or in his own parlor, Fred lingered near Nellie. Society did not notice it, only Charley did, and each night the last words he wrote in his life journal were "Poor Fred." And why did he linger by her side when he saw her apparently giving every thought to Don Carara? Aye! there was in his heart a secret hope that she would yet turn to him; a secret distrust of the Spaniard. He remembered how that night in the conservatory she had suddenly turned and begged him to take her away. She might again turn, and ask protection; he would not leave her; should he never have cause to hope for her love, yet he would stay and guard her.

Charley Hasbrook, change those words in your life journal—write Noble Fred. Your brother is not poor, his heart is a mine of purest gold. He deserves your heartiest admiration, not your pity.

We have said that Nellie covered her unhappiness by a gay manner. But though she was gay when the world had its eyes upon her, it was very different when she was alone. When in society there were

many to watch her, and she had the constant consciousness that Clara Hasbrook, with her Argus eyes, saw her every movement. And very often, too, she felt Mr. Hartley's eyes upon her. Should she show him, should she show the world, how hurt, how neglected she was? And then she would fairly lavish favors upon Don Carara. But when alone she recoiled at the thought of him; became disgusted with the deceitful part she was acting; the void, empty, aimless life she was living. She could not bear to be alone. She tried to banish every thought of Malbrook, and when her weekly letters from home came, kind and gentle ones from Mrs. Holmes, with long, childlike messages from May, full of longings for the spring, when "she and Uncle Robert should come home," she would grow fairly reckless.

One day, after reading one of those letters, she prepared herself for a walk, and left the house.

It was a fair sample of a winter day. A day full of cruel winds, and white, mocking sunshine. The thoroughfares were crowded. Magnificent equipages, with their liveried coachmen and footmen, rolled in perfect streams up and down the avenues; while on the crowded corners, stood half naked, beggared creatures, extending blue, shivering palms for an alm, and men passed by, and muttered, "God help them," and left it all to God: then buttoned their great coats closer about them and said, "it was a bitter day." Aye! the cutting wind *was* cruel, and the cold white sunshine *was* mocking, but man's



lack of charity was far *more cruel* and his *pity* far more mocking.

Nellie avoided the promenade streets, where wealth and fashion came out for a morning airing, and to show themselves, and sought the business streets, where she might mingle with the crowd, and see if in the life and bustle she could not for a little space forget. She forgot that we are never more alone than in a crowd. A crowd is a pitiless thing. Each one must strive, and jostle, and fight, to make his way. Walking in a crowd is very like making one's fortune. The bravest, boldest, and most daring, and above all *most impudent*, are the ones who succeed, while the timid and sensitive are knocked about; pushed to one side and walked over. There is no place in the world, where one shows one's disposition more than in a crowd.

Nellie moved among that vast throng in a half timid, half eager way; wrapped in furs, she did not heed the cold, though the frosty biting wind did pinch her cheeks until they were a rich carnation. Youth and beauty are a sort of passport in this world; even the hardest are attracted and softened by it. They are always refreshing, never more so than in a crowd. For when human beings are congregated into a great mass, there is such an overwhelming majority of ugly faces, that an occasional young and pretty one is a perfect god-send, and the remembrance of it will keep one in a better humor with life for hours. Nellie never saw the many who turned and looked after her, and though most of the

time there was an open, easy path made for her in that great throng, she little suspected the reason why.

We once heard a gentleman say, that next to a pretty girl, there was nothing more refreshing than a school girl. We agree with him exactly. There is something so light hearted and buoyant about them. They are as yet but standing on the threshold of life, and the scene before them is gay and highly colored. They are so easily pleased; the least thing will throw them into ecstasies; with them every person, and every thing, is "perfectly splendid," and surely, it is refreshing to meet some, in this fault-finding world, who can be easily gratified. Sometimes, as we see them tripping along the streets, their arms loaded with books, whose contents they haven't the slightest intention of ever putting into their heads, we think, with our friend who admires them so much, we could follow them for blocks.

There is indeed an indescribable charm in youth and beauty. Who is not in a measure their worshiper? Nellie's eyes were bent upon the ground; her thoughts were in Malbrook. She had come into this crowd, "*to forget*," foolish child! Where now were her thoughts? At Malbrook. She was thinking of the happy years she had spent there, and wondering how it would be when she should return. She had long since ceased wishing for the spring, and instead of looking forward to it with happy anticipations, thought of it only with dread. She never could be happy there again; never live under the same roof

with Mr. Hartley year in and year out; and then he might bring a bride to Malbrook—Clara Hasbrook, perhaps; she grew faint at the very thought. How would it all end? She shuddered at the thought of the future, "the viewless, fated future!"

But for all her restlessness and heart-aching, hope had not entirely forsaken her. Ever she was looking forward to brighter days; ever hope was whispering "to-morrow." "Often the fearful Present is comforted by the flattering Future, and kind to-morrow beareth half the burdens of to-day." Some one spoke her name in a low tone. She glanced up. Don Carara was by her side. Her brow clouded; she did not speak. Must she be followed everywhere? Must he haunt her every step? Couldn't she be alone one minute? He took no notice of her coldness, but said, in his eager, passionate way:

"Something told me, as I came along in the crowd, that you were near me, Nellie." She was silent.

"Why are you here in this throng? Why not in B—— Street?"

"I wanted to be alone," was the distant reply. She had given him nothing but smiles for so long, he looked hurt and sad. She caught the expression; she was so troubled herself that she could not inflict pain, so when he asked:

"Do you want me to leave you, Nellie?"

She said "No," in a low, remorseful tone. The sorrow all fled his face then; it was bright and joyful. He walked quietly by her side with his eyes fixed upon her face, waiting patiently for her to break the

silence. The crowd grew denser. Nellie swayed to and fro in the current.

"Nellie, the crowd will separate us," and as he spoke he drew her hand within his arm. She let it rest there, though she felt she was doing wrong. She was adding links to the chain that already bound her to him; only making the waking up harder for him; and laying up bitter remorse for herself.

They walked block after block in perfect silence. Nellie looking straight before her on the crowd, apparently forgetful of her companion; he, with his eyes fixed upon her face, waiting for her to speak. He had become accustomed to her fickleness. At length, weary of walking, she said, without glancing at him:

"We will go home." He turned, obedient to her will. She had walked further than she had dreamt of, and as they retraced one long crowded block after another, her step grew weary, and lost its lightness. Don Carara noticed it, and asked,

"Shall I call a carriage, Nellie?"

"No," was the decided reply. As they neared home Don Carara left the crowd, and turned into the promenade street; Nellie raised no objection. It was a relief to be out of the press. She did not withdraw her hand from Don Carara's arm; she did not think how much it would imply, taking his arm in broad daylight. But Don Carara *did*; one could see that, in the exultant joyful expression in his dark Spanish face. Very many friends did they meet on that homeward walk. Nellie's bows were very graceful

ones ; Don Carara's deep and triumphant, and each friend and acquaintance they encountered, said to his companion, or was he alone, to himself:

"Nellie Holmes is affianced. The Spaniard has won."

When almost home they met Mr. Hartley. His bow, though perfect, was colder, prouder than usual. Nellie's first impulse, when she saw him, was to draw away her hand, but one glance at his cold, proud face deterred her, and as he passed she made some gay remark to Don Carara, the first one during the walk. Don Carara left her at the door, saying, in a low, confident tone :

"I shall see you to-night." She neither gave nor denied permission, did not even look at him as she said good-bye. Her thoughts were not of him ; they had gone on with Mr. Hartley. The drawing-room door stood open, and hating the thought of going to her own room, and being alone, she went in. Clara Hasbrook stood in the window ; as Nellie entered, she turned and said, knowingly,

"So, Nellie, it is at last acknowledged?"

"What?" asked Nellie, in astonishment.

"Why, your engagement to Don Carara. Didn't I just see you taking his arm in broad day-light?"

Nellie's cheek blanched ; she had not thought of it before. A moment she was silent, then said haughtily—

"I am not engaged to Don Carara, and never will be."

"There is no use to deny it. You have just ac-

knowledged it in a most public manner ; besides, every one says you are."

"I should think I was a better judge of my own affairs than any one else," interrupted Nellie, coldly, then left the room. She longed to be alone *now*. She went immediately to her own room, locked the door, and tearing off her hat, threw herself on the bed, burying her face in the pillows. She did not cry, she did not even sigh. Outwardly, she was perfectly quiet, but the mind was hard at work, very hard.

"Had Don Carara looked upon it in that light? She remembered the confident tone in which he had told her he would see her that night. It had been his wont to plead, to implore, and then those words, "Destiny has made you mine," rung in her ears, and she grew fairly faint ; and then Mr. Hartley had seen her ; her head sunk more heavily on the pillow at the thought.

There was a low rap at the door ; she sprang up quickly—her face was very white—and asked in a strange, cold voice,

"Who is there?"

"Me, Miss Nellie ;" it was Clemancy's voice. She unlocked the door. The girl entered, bearing a tray.

"I brought you your lunch, miss."

"I am not hungry ; you need not leave it."

"Drink the tea, miss, it'll do you good after your walk."

After her walk. She shuddered at the thought.

"You can leave it. I will drink it if I wish it."

The tone was cold, but the maid lingered ; there

was evidently something troubling her. She too had seen Nellie come home. Nellie was standing waiting for her to go, so when she could find no excuse for remaining, she went with a very troubled, dissatisfied look. Nellie locked the door again, fearing intrusion, and sat down in an easy chair, before the fire. But the soft cushions held no comfort for her. All that long afternoon that sentence, "Destiny has made you mine," was ringing in her ears. Had there been a spell cast about her? Was there some hidden power drawing her to her doom?

It should not be! She would never yield! She would tell Don Carara that very night that he had misunderstood her; she hardly could wait for night, hardly wait to dispel the thralldom.

Yet she dreaded to tell him, dreaded to awake him from his dream; was fearful of the result, he was so passionate.

So the day passed, and the night gathered all about her in her misery. When Clemancy entered to assist her in making her toilet for dinner, she cast a very *troubled* look at the untouched food, and the tea cold in its cup. The dinner was a very uncomfortable one. Aunt Lucet was more peevish than usual. Clara was in a delightful mood, all smiles and graces, constantly throwing out sly insinuations to Nellie about losing her appetite in expectancy, and advising her to keep cool, as an hour would soon pass.

Nellie maintained a haughty silence, pretending not to understand what she meant; but her almost painful changes of color told very plainly that she knew

only too well. The Judge was unusually deaf, and desirous of hearing everything that was said, keeping some one constantly repeating. Fred ate nothing, and said nothing, and Charley sat moodily looking from one to another, annoying every one as much as it was possible, and at length, when the meal was about half over, leaving the table and *attempting* to leave the room; but in accomplishing the latter feat, he tumbled over Top, who was turning somersets near the door. He gave the "innocent cause" a sound shaking, when he might with far more justice have shaken himself, for not putting his eyes to the right use. But the truth of it was, he was writing in his life journal, and might as well have had no eyes.

Nellie, the moment the meal was over, again started for her room. As she passed the drawing room she glanced in. Don Carara stood by the fire. He saw her and motioned for her to come in. She shook her head and was going on, but on second thought she returned.

"Now she would see if he had misunderstood her, and if he had, undeceive him; now was the time or never."

He hastened to meet her with a joyous smile and extended hands, but she avoided him and went over to the fire, where he had been standing.

She did not look at him; the first glance had told her that her fears were realized. How should she tell him he had misunderstood her? His brow for a

moment clouded at her manner, then coming near to her, he asked in a low, eager tone:

"When will you be my bride, Nellie? When will you go with me to my beautiful Spain?"

His bride! she shuddered at the thought. Her lips formed themselves into that cold hard word, "never;" but ere she had spoken it, Clara Hasbrook entered the room. Her step was as noiseless as ever, but Nellie, in her great dread and agony, was alive to the faintest sound. She turned immediately.

Clara drew back, and making an apology was about leaving the room. There was so much implied in that apology, that Nellie, stung to the quick, in an almost demanding tone called her back. An instant after she was followed by Judge Hasbrook and Aunt Lucet.

Nellie, scarce knowing what she did, and anxious for anything for a relief, unceremoniously left Clara to entertain Don Carara, and offered to play backgammon with Aunt Lucet.

Nothing ever put the old lady into a better humor than to have some one offer to play her favorite game with her, so they were soon throwing the dice.

Nellie usually played well, but to-night she scarcely knew what she was doing, and Aunt Lucet chuckled gleefully, as she won game after game.

Nellie was hardly conscious who lost or won; her playing was purely mechanical, and perfectly reckless. Aunt Lucet was in her element, for she thought from the way Nellie tossed out the dice, and her quick, impetuous manner of playing, that she was

very much interested and excited as to the result. She little thought how distant her thoughts were from the backgammon board.

Poor Nellie. She had lost her first opportunity; she felt she could never again raise the courage to tell him. It was as if a chain had been cast about her, binding her hand and foot, and she shuddered as she thought how she had helped forge its every link. Could it ever be broken? The delusion would continually grow on him. She had not the courage to tell him; her only help was to show him in her actions.

All the while that Nellie played, Clara talked to Don Carara. His face was brilliant; she was rallying him about Nellie. Presently Mr. Shelbourne came in for his usual argument with the Judge. Then came Clifford and Phips and a half a dozen others, and Aunt Lucet was obliged to relinquish Nellie. As the evening wore on, and there was nothing of Mr. Hartley, Clara Hasbrook grew restless; she made no effort to conceal it, but wondered aloud many times where he could be, and what could have detained him. Nellie wondered too. She felt more relieved than she could tell at his absence. It would have been so very much harder had he been there. But still for all her relief she wondered. She little dreamt that others than herself had a lesson of self-control to learn; little dreamt that after that cold, proud bow, Mr. Hartley conned the most difficult lesson of his life, the very one she was finding so hard. But it was easier for him, he was an adept in

the ways of the world, and knew how to hide his every thought and feeling.

All the long evening Nellie gave no glance to Don Carara. She had often done so before, but it seemed harder for him to bear it to-night. His smiles fled, and Clara Hasbrook no longer had power to entertain him. He said nothing, only looking sorrowfully and reproachfully at Nellie. She knew his eyes were on her face, but she never met them. Presently, Fred and Charley came in. Fred, as from force of habit, taking a chair by Nellie's side. He was very quiet, to-night, and there was a firm, set look about his mouth. Clifford noticed his silence, and asked, gaily:

"What is up, Fred? What is the matter?"

Nellie heard the question, and glancing round with the kind, bright smile she always had for him, asked:

"What is it, Fred?"

He returned the smile with a very faint one—a mere shadow of his usual ones. Charley, standing by, heard and saw it all, and got a choking sensation in his throat. "He must do something to put a stop to the way things were working. They shouldn't torment Fred. He would ask Nellie to sing; no he wouldn't, either, for if she sung to-night, he would be sure to make a fool of himself. They would play cards, that was it."

The proposal was soon made, and acted upon, and Fred was not the only one who felt relieved.


Nellie avoided sitting at the same table with Don

Carara. He gave her a reproachful look, but she pretended not to see it. When the others arose to leave, Don Carara did so too. As he bade Nellie good-night, his lip quivered, and there was a hurt, sad look in his great, dark eyes. She had meant to part with him coldly, but had not the heart to, and on the impulse of the moment, extended her hand. He grasped it impetuously, raised it to his lips, then turned and was gone.

Nellie's heart sank the moment she had done it. She was only increasing the delusion, adding links to the chain.

Fred alone saw the action, and the set look about his mouth increased.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

ND so a week went by. Every morning Nellie would whisper to her heart, "I will tell him to-night." But when night came, and he would meet her with his eager, expectant face, her courage would fail; and thus she had let him hug his delusion, treating him oftenest with coldness, but at times, when stung by remorse, at his disappointed, sorrowful looks, bestowing favors on him, for which she afterward bitterly repented.

She had never, since that night, given him an opportunity to repeat the question he had then asked, never suffered herself to be alone with him one moment. Every day he had come and asked to see her, if but for a moment, alone, and every day she had had Clemency frame an excuse. He had written her note after note, and she had answered none of them.

That walk had been discussed all through society, and people wondered at her manners, and said if she really was engaged, she treated him shamefully, and that the Spaniard was a fool to take it.

Many doubted that she was engaged, but Clara Hasbrook did her best to dispel all doubt, asserting, in her quiet, truth-appearing way, "That it was so." One thing, however, puzzled Clara. Mr. Hartley

had spent but one evening with her since that walk of Nellie's and Don Carara's. She had thought it would have exactly the opposite effect. She was perfectly astonished; could make nothing of it. When she met him, he was fascinating and entertaining as ever, but he never came to see her; the tables had taken a new turn; the game required more study than she had anticipated.

Clara was not the only one puzzled. The world had gotten hold of that queer feature of the act, and was making game of it.

They verily believed that Mr. Hartley liked Nellie Holmes after all, and his visiting Clara Hasbrook was only a farce, and yet he gave Nellie no attention in society. They could make nothing of him, and came to the conclusion that he must be either a flirt or a puzzle.

Charley seemed to enjoy Mr. Hartley's neglect. It was his constant theme of conversation, whenever his sister was by; many were his excuses for him; many the Latin phrases he quoted over him; many the winks he gave his sister when others were around, and she had no opportunity to retort.

Ah! Charley Hasbrook, you are a sad character.

There was a party at the Cliffords'.

For this party, Clara Hasbrook had taken unusual pains with her toilet, for to-night she meant to do great things with Mr. Hartley. Nellie at first had not intended going, but the dread, lest Don Carara, missing her, should come and seek her, and the consciousness that she could avoid him better in a

crowd, made her change her mind. She looked beautifully. The excitement, caused by the dread of being left alone with Don Carara, had added a more than usual brilliancy to her face. Her dress was elegant and becoming. She had selected it with a secret wish to rival Clara Hasbrook; why she wished to, she would not acknowledge, even to herself. She had her wish, though, for she far out-rivalled her. The moment she entered the room, she was surrounded by a circle of admirers. Don Carara was among the first to seek her. She did not meet his passionate, ardent expression, but averted her face. When he asked her to dance the first set with him, she pretended not to hear him, but gave her hand to Clifford, who was making the same request. Thus she avoided dancing with him set after set.

Clara Hasbrook seized Mr. Hartley when he first entered the room. He divided his attention between her and Miss Clifford, and as the evening wore on, he danced oftenest with Clara Hasbrook. He had not come near Nellie, only once, when encountering her in the dance, acknowledging her presence in his cold, proud way. All the time Nellie danced, Don Carara stood apart by himself and watched. There was fierceness and determination mingled with the sadness on his face. Nellie, glancing at him, caught the expression and shuddered. At length, when the evening was far advanced, he left the room. She did not miss him at first, but after a while, glancing over to where he had stood, she found his place vacant. At first her feeling was relief, but remem-

bering the reckless, desperate expression he had worn when last she saw him, a dull sense of dread crept over her. Her gay remarks were hushed, and the sparkles faded out of her eyes.

The evening was passing away; night was fading into early morn, and in all that time Don Carara's place was yet vacant.

Set after set Nellie had danced, many times made a circle of the room in promenading, and in every dance, at every turn, had encountered Clara Hasbrook and Mr. Hartley, and at every such encounter her laugh was light and gay, her remarks to her companion piquant.

But at length her step grew weary, and her heart faint, and as new sets were forming, she stole away for a moment's rest. She was seeking the dressing-room. On her way she passed the conservatory. As if by magnetism she glanced within. There, leaning against a pillar, was Don Carara. He did not see her; his eyes were fastened upon the floor, his head drooped upon his breast, his whole appearance dejected. It touched her, that drooping, despondent look that she knew she had caused. She paused in indecision. "Should she go and give him one word of comfort, or should she continue her coldness?"

While she stood thus undecided, Mr. Hartley and Clara Hasbrook passed, both glancing at her as they did so. Their presence made her reckless, and without counting the cost, she stepped into the conservatory, and stole softly up to Don Carara's side. He did not see her, so in a low tone she spoke his name.



You should have seen the change that passed over Don Carara then. His face was fairly radiant. A moment he was silent, then grasping both her hands, murmured:

"Nellie, you have come at last."

She turned pale, and trembled at what she had done. She had acted in desperation, on the impulse of the moment. She had not realized the effect it would have on him, and that it would throw her into the very position she had been trying to avoid for a week.

She stood perfectly still. It was too late to draw back now.

"Nellie, why have you kept me thus in torment? Why driven me to madness? Tell me, Nellie!"

She averted her face. She dared not meet his glance.

"When will you be my bride? I pine for my fatherland, for beautiful Spain. When will you go with me there? Tell me, Nellie; you shall not leave me till you do;" and he drew her nearer to him, tightening the grasp on her hands until it was painful. He was almost fierce in his passion. Her face blanched; they were alone; there was no help."

"What, no answer? But you *shall* tell me?" fiercely. Then added, pleadingly: "Say you love me, Nellie! I am dying for your love; you are killing me by slow torture. Say only once that you love me, and then should you be colder than you have ever yet been, more cruel than is in human

heart to be, I will never murmur. 'Tis but a little word; say it, Nellie!"

He had bent his head until his face almost touched hers, and there was such a magnetism in the passion of his eyes, she could not but meet them. She was falling under his power, yielding from terror and fascination.

There was the sound of gay laughter and talking. A party was entering the conservatory. With a feeling of unutterable relief, she snatched away her hands, and stood silently by his side, with averted face. She *felt*, though she did not see the reproach and agony in his face, while he said, in a low, passionate tone:

"Nellie, you can whisper it, even though others are around. Nellie, for God's sake!"

Was she stone? Had she no heart, that she could withstand the agony of that tone?

No, she was not stone! She had a heart, and it was all torn and suffering too.

Among those who had entered, she heard Mr. Hartley's voice. She could not say it; it would be worse than perjury. She turned—Fred stood by her side—Fred, her good angel.

She passed her hand within his arm, and whispered:

"Fred, will you take me home?"

She cast no glance at the Spaniard—she dared not.

Fred had *not* waited in vain, she had turned and sought protection.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

**T**HEY were playing Othello at the theatre. Judge Hasbrook's box was full. Nellie sat a little back, partley screened by the curtains. Don Carara was beside her, his eyes fixed upon her face. He had not cast one glance upon the stage. There was a strange light in his great, dark eyes, to-night, one that told of desperation and passion, and occasionally the full, red lips set themselves together with an expression that made one shudder. Nellie had not heard one word of the play. She sat looking listlessly over the building, with no expression of interest on her face, which wore a restless, troubled look.

If there is any truth in the saying:

"Coming events cast their shadow before,"

surely such a shadow had fallen over Nellie. She had a nameless dread. She felt as if some terrible destiny was hanging over her, and she was in a terrified, though passive state of expectancy. It might come any moment, this dreadful fatality, and it might not come for days, or even weeks, but come it would, she knew. The strange relation between Don Carara and herself was wearing on her. The

constant effort to veil her depression of spirit; the constant battling against the Spaniard's influence was showing on her, for although Don Carara said but little, his magnetic eyes were always on her, and they had more power than words. She had not met them once that night, she had gotten to dread them.

Mr. Hartley did not come to Judge Hasbrook's box that evening, excepting for one moment. Nellie, though she was scarce conscious of it, saw him wherever he was. At his every movement her eyes followed him. Don Carara saw it, and the set, firm look increased on his voluptuous lips.

Clara, too, was watching Mr. Hartley with a very discontented face. She saw scarcely anything of him any more. He had decidedly neglected her, giving far more attention to Miss Clifford than to her. Ever since the morning he had met Don Carara and Nellie, his visits had been less frequent. Clara was puzzled. She had thought *that* would be the crowning point of success; she could not explain it. She feared she had made a misdeal in her cards; at any rate the game was against her, but she would not be beaten; she had said she would not leave a stone unturned, and she would not. She had disposed of Nellie; surely none could be as formidable a rival as she. If she could but once get Mr. Hartley to spending his evenings with her, all would be right.

Most of the evening Mr. Hartley spent in Clifford's box, and Clara would see clear across the building,

without the aid of any glass, that Fannie Clifford's face was wreathed in smiles. Clara's eyes were very green with jealousy that night. All the evening Nellie watched Mr. Hartley; she had seen so little of him of late; she had missed his visits, though when he had come, he had given all his attention to Clara. Lately they had met as strangers.

Occasionally he would level his glass at Judge Hasbrook's box, and then Nellie's cheek would flush, and she would avert her glance, lest he might look at her, and find her watching him. Whenever she would thus avert her eyes, the strange light in Don Carara's face would increase, and Nellie grew restless under his burning gaze.

Not one word all that long evening had he spoken; he had said little since the night he had pleaded with her to but once say she loved him; had never spoken of her being his bride; but he had not, when it was possible, been absent from her side one instant; ever keeping his great magnetic eyes, in which the strange light they had to-night had all the while been growing, fixed upon her face. At length the performance was over, and amidst the applause, Mr. Clifford came to Nellie's side, and opened his fire of small talk. She did not hear Don Carara tell Fred that they need not wait for her, as his carriage was waiting; did not notice that they had left the box. At length Don Carara said:

"Let me take you to your carriage, Nellie; the others have gone."

She glanced around; there was no help for it, it

was as he had said; so with a good night to Mr. Clifford, she took his arm, though her hand trembled as she did it. Don Carara noticed it, for he inclosed it tightly in his, and bending his face low to hers, whispered:

"Does my love terrify you so, Nellie?"

She raised her eyes; they met his, fixed upon her with that look that always acted on her like a spell. She shuddered as she fell into the thralldom. His passion was so fierce, so deep, that it terrified her.

They moved on through the crowd, and ever as she encountered a familiar face, the sudden impulse would arise to cry for deliverance; but when she would meet those dark, restless eyes, the impulse would die, only to arise again at the next familiar face.

Every moment that dreadful foreboding of some approaching evil grew upon her; her fate seemed crowding in upon her, and crushing her in its very approach. The moments were like hours. It seemed as if they would never leave the crowd; never reach the Judge's carriage. The crowd was dense; the air heated. She grew faint from the heat, and her secret dread and suspense. As they moved on, Don Carara tightened the grasp of her hand until it was painful; she made no effort to release it, yielded passively to her fate, only every moment growing fainter.

Don Carara noticed her increasing paleness, and supporting her with his arm bore her quickly into the open air, then stopping, whispered, with fierce joy:

"Destiny has made you mine. This night you shall be my bride."

They were standing before his own carriage, not the Judge's.

She tore his arm from her, exclaiming, coldly:

"Don Carara, you have deceived me; take me to Judge Hasbrook's carriage."

"Never," said he, fiercely.

One hand grasped her arm, the other was on the open door. She shook it angrily from her, and turned to see if there was no help. A gentleman was passing; the gaslight showed her his face. "Mr. Hartley!"—she scarce knew her own voice, it was so strangely cold. In a moment he was beside her.

"Mr. Hartley, will you take me to Judge Hasbrook's carriage?"

She dare not trust herself to look at Don Carara; She knew she was safe, yet she wanted to run. She scarce waited for Mr. Hartley to offer his arm, but took it, and hurried him rapidly away. She never looked at him; never thought how surprised he must be; her only thought was flight.

He moderated his pace and said quietly,

"Judge Hasbrook's carriage has gone. I will call another."

She made no objection; said nothing; but when he had called it, sprang in and threw herself all trembling into the seat. Mr. Hartley, after giving directions, sat down beside her, and watched her anxiously by the dim light the carriage lanterns threw in. For a moment she trembled violently, then—

burying her face in her hands burst into tears. He said nothing, but sat quietly watching her, apparently waiting for her to have her cry out.

At last, becoming conscious of how strange it must all have appeared to him, she said confusedly, brushing away her tears,

"I am sorry to have given you all this trouble, but Don Carara offended me this evening, and I did not wish to go home in his carriage."

He said "she had given him more pleasure than trouble," but asked no questions. The tears sprang afresh, but by dint of biting her lips until the blood almost started, she forced them back. He tried to relieve her embarrassment, talking lightly on different subjects, discussing the play, the several characters, and the manner in which they were sustained. Once he referred to the days at Malbrook, but lightly, as of a thing past that would not interest her. She looked up eagerly when he did so, and for the first time showed interest in what he was saying; but the light was dim and he did not see it.

When they reached home, Nellie thanked him very humbly, but never thought to ask him in. He did not seem inclined to stand on ceremony however; perhaps he anticipated the flood of questions that she would have to encounter, and knew that she was not fit to answer them alone. If he did, he was not disappointed, for scarcely had they entered the parlor before Clara and Charley exclaimed in a breath,

"Why, Nellie, where is Don Carara?"

Mr. Hartley answered for her,

"The last we saw of him was at the theatre entrance."

"Why, Fred told us you had accepted a seat in his carriage home," said Clara, giving Nellie that look of surprise she knew so well how to assume.


"Fred, was mistaken," replied Nellie, coldly.

"We may thank the mistake for the pleasure of seeing Mr. Hartley, I suppose," said Clara, sweetly, but with a deal of hidden sarcasm in her tone.

Fred, standing by Nellie's side with a very troubled expression on his face, was begging forgiveness for his mistake.

"Nellie," said Aunt Lucet, in her querulous tone, "didn't you like the play to-night? I thought it was lovely. To think of poor—what's her name?—being smothered by that black fellow!"

## CHAPTER XXV.

HERE had been a heavy snow-storm. It had been arranged before-hand that after the next snow, there should be a sleighing party. They had watched the clouds for days, and now at last it had come, and the earth was robed in white.

The party was to meet at Judge Hasbrook's, and starting from there, were going eight miles out of the city to a hotel kept for such parties, where they were to get their supper, and have a dance. All of course were expecting a deal of pleasure. Nellie, the morning of the eventful day, was standing by the parlor window with Fred, admiring the snow, and talking of the anticipated ride, when Don Carara's servant came up the steps. She frowned a little, and bit her lips, for she knew full well he bore a note from his master. She had not seen Don Carara for several nights—not since she parted with him at the theatre. He had been at the Judge's every evening, but she had remained in her room on plea of headache.

Luke brought in the note, saying that the man had not waited for an answer. As if from a presentiment of its contents, she went to her own room to read it. Closing the door after her, and turning the key, then remaining standing, tore it impatiently open. Her cheeks blanched as she read the contents. It was reckless and passionate, written in desperation. It

beseeked, commanded her to ride with him that night alone, vowing by high Heaven, that did she refuse, the morrow's sun should not find him on the earth. He was to receive his answer when he came that night.

She staggered to a chair and sat looking vacantly at the carpet. "Ride with him alone!" the other night's experience had shown what the consequence would be. Death was far preferable, and did she refuse, she grew faint at the thought of the result.

She bent her head in perfect agony.

Must she marry him? be his bride when she fairly loathed him? no! she would die first! and yet if not his wife, his murderess. No! no! she could not be; she would marry him; there was no help; God had forgotten to be merciful! Oh God!"

And in her agony, she fell on her knees before her Maker. The great drops of sweat stood out on her brow; her white lips were set and cold; her eyes wild, and full of terror and despair.

She knew Don Carara so well; knew to what, passion would drive him. In her agony she seemed to hear a holy, God-like voice, saying:

"None ever asked in vain."

Then occurred to her the thought that she should go to her guardian. But she dare not tell him; it would only make matters worse, and she wrung her hands in agony, and swayed to and fro upon the floor. But it was her only help. If she found assistance anywhere, it would be in him. She would go to him, and tell him she did not want to go to-night,

and he must prevent it; it was her only help, and she sprang up and went to seek the Judge.

He was in the dining-room reading the morning paper. She went over to where he sat. He laid aside his paper, and asked,

"Well now, what is it? Have you settled on a husband and come for me to sign the papers? Out with it!"

"I want"—here she came to a dead stop, not knowing how to go on.

"Of course you do; you wouldn't be a woman if you didn't; but what do you want? hey!"

"I don't want"—began Nellie again.

"But you just said you did," interrupted the Judge.

"But I don't. I don't want to go sleighing to-night," drawing a long sigh of relief, when it was out. "And you must help me out of going."

The Judge looked at her in perfect astonishment.

"You not want to go? Why, you have talked of nothing but sleigh-rides for over a week! You not want to go?"

"I don't."

"The deuce you don't! and why?"

"Because."

"'Cause. That's a great why! and you want me to help you out of it, hey?"

"Yes," coaxingly.

"You will miss fun; it is fine sleighing."

"I know, but I don't want to go," with a white, troubled face.

"Well, then you shan't," kindly. "Though I don't know how I shall prevent it; it will raise a perfect hullabaloo." He sat looking straight before him, scratching his head as if trying to scratch a plan out of it, then said,

"You shall not go. I'll give you my word for it. But don't tell any one. Get all ready as if you were going, and if I can't do it before, I'll do it at the last minute."

Nellie looked infinitely relieved, and thanked him very gratefully, for which politeness he boxed her ears. She left the room with a somewhat lightened heart.

All day long Clara's tongue, whenever she could find any one to talk to, ran on the sleigh-ride. She was evidently laying great store by it.

The evening before, she had, apparently in fun, spoken Mr. Hartley to fill the seat next her in the sleigh; he had, of course, accepted.

Clara Hasbrook had a way of gaining attention. She could, in her affable insinuating way, obtain an invitation from the most worldly-wise, and when hinting failed, she did not scruple at asking. It was as much as a man's life was worth, to get clear of her, if she once took a fancy to him.

She was in the highest of spirits all day. Lately she had feared that she had lost Mr. Hartley, but he would ride with her to-night, and before that ride was over, she would draw from him another engagement.

Take care, Mr. Hartley; be choice of your remarks

to-night, or before you are conscious of it, Clara Hasbrook will think you have proposed, and accept you on the spot.

All day long, Nellie staid in her own room. She could not be where they all were; she could not hear Clara going over the same old story, of how much pleasure she anticipated, and how Mr. Hartley had made her promise to keep a seat for him beside her in the sleigh; she never suspected a falsehood.

Every little while, Clemaney came into the room, for the ostensible purpose of setting it to rights and seeing to the fire; but all the while she was doing it, she was looking out of the corners of her eyes at Nellie's flushed and troubled face, drawing great sighs, very softly though, and muttering to herself.

"Things has got all kicked up, like; it won't come to no good, no how."

It was a long, long day to Nellie—a day almost without end. She longed for, yet dreaded, the night. She was very restless, not knowing what to do with herself. One moment she would try to read, the next toss the book impatiently from her, and sit looking into the fire. She would stand by the half hour at the window, looking at, yet scarcely seeing, the passers-by.

Once, while thus looking, Mr. Hartley passed and raised his hat gracefully to some one in the drawing-room window. She knew full well it was Clara Hasbrook, and biting her lips, she leant forward and watched him out of sight.



Then the day began to fade, and the early winter twilight gathered. As the time approached, her head ached violently; her temples throbbed, and cold chills, making her very teeth chatter, crept over her, caused by the excitement. She tried to overcome it, throwing a shawl about her and drawing nearer to the fire to get warm. But every moment the chills increased, and instantly expecting the dinner bell to ring, and knowing she could not possibly go down in the condition she was in, she rang for Clemancy, and had her bring her a glass of wine. The maid looked very anxious and troubled, and said in her quick way:

"It'll just end you up, miss, to go out to-night. You had a heap better go to bed."

Nellie made no answer, only drawing away from the fire; the wine was warming her. A little after, the dinner bell rang, and exchanging the heavy shawl she had thrown around her, for a light zephyr one, she went down to the dining-room. The chill had passed, but it had left her very pale.

They were all seated at the table when she entered.

As Fred made room for her beside him, he started at her almost dazzling whiteness, but made no comment. Nellie scarcely saw any one at the table; only pretended to sip her soup, looking anxiously at the Judge. She did not catch his eye at first, but when she did there was a quiet twinkle in it that partly reassured her.

The sleigh-ride was the subject of conversation. It seemed impossible for Clara to think or speak of

anything else. She and her father did most of the talking, he asking numerous questions.

"How many were going? where they were going? and what they were going to do when they got there?" Clara was in her element, answering all the questions he asked, and a great many that he didn't. Aunt Lucet, in a very discontented tone at the anticipation of spending her evening alone, kept saying, every few minutes, that she thought people must be crazy to go sleighing, cold winter nights."

Charley let her make the remark a number of times, then asked, in a quiet, provoking way:

"When would you have them go sleighing, aunt? Not summer nights?"

The old lady, who had been waiting for some cause to give vent to her ill-humor, seized the opportunity.

"You impudent, saucy lad, I'd just like to know who asked any opinion of you? You had better wait till you are spoken to."

Charley made no answer, but with the hope of conciliating her, passed her a dish of pickled peaches that stood beside his plate. The old lady, blinded by ill temper, misunderstood his intended kindness, and exclaimed, in her sharp, querulous tone.

"You wicked, deep fellow! You think I'm like a pickle, do you?"

Charley was so taken back with the interpretation of his act, and struck with the ludicrousness of the affair, that he burst out laughing.

This added to the old lady's rage, and knocking the table with her fork-handle she exclaimed:

"Brother, do you hear that?" Then glaring at Charley, fairly shrieked: "What will you do when you come to die? you bad, bad fellow!"

Charley drew his face to a deacon-like length, and ordered the servant, who stood behind him, to bring him a cup of tea. It was maliciously done. The old lady's face was livid; she fairly trembled with anger, and shouted:

"Brother, either that sinful lad, or me, must leave the table!"

The Judge said, sternly:

"Charles, beg your aunt's pardon, or leave the table."

Charley considered a moment, then muttering,

"The deuce! I'll not lose my dinner," and with a bow so deep as to amount to mockery, said: "I crave your pardon, most noble aunt."

Aunt Lucet maintained a contemptuous silence. Nellie ate nothing. Clara noticed it, and asked,

"Have you lost your appetite in anticipation?"

She did not hear her; she had not even heard the quarrel between Charley and Aunt Lucet. Her every thought was on that dreaded ride. "What would she say to Don Carara? Would the Judge be true to his word? God help her if he should fail."

The meal was scarcely over, before the members of the party began to assemble in the parlor, and in a few minutes more the sleighs were before the door.

Nellie heard Don Carara's voice. She grew very pale, and turned an imploring glance on the Judge. He returned it with a very assuring one.

"Come, Nellie, it is time we were getting ready," exclaimed Clara, jumping up, and skipping from the room. Nellie followed, scarcely knowing what she did. She prepared as completely for the ride, as if going; wrapping from head to foot in furs; even drinking the wine Clemency urged her to, to keep her from taking cold.

When she entered the parlor, her eyes, as if by magnetism, rested on Don Carara. He stood alone, at the farther end of the room. In an instant she caught the expression of his face; it was desperate. He was waiting for her answer to his note. She went immediately toward him, drawn by the fascination of terror, and as she went, bowed to some, and said good evening to others, though she was hardly conscious of it.

And now she stood beside him; she would scarce have known him, so changed was his face, so ghastly, so desperate, so full of suspense. He bent a searching, questioning glance upon her, and extending his hand, asked in a fierce, passionate tone:

"You will ride with me alone, Nellie?"

She was very white, but extreme terror had driven away all trembling, all faintness, leaving her painfully alive to her situation. She placed her hand in his, and said, in a low, strange tone:

"I will ride with no one else."

He grasped her hand, and bending his head, show-

ered it with kisses. She recoiled at those kisses, and drew it away, very gently, though. She dared not do it otherwise. Then joined the party, who were standing in a group.

Don Carara followed her, and stood beside her so closely that his flowing Spanish cloak touched her fur wrappings. She longed to fly from him, but she dare not; the last link was added to the chain, and she was captive. She saw the group in which she was standing, as one sees objects in a dream; saw Clara Hasbrook talking gaily to Mr. Hartley; saw that he was unusually quiet, and once saw him bend on herself a stern, searching glance. Though she saw them all, she was alive but to one presence; that was Don Carara's. It was as if an iron net-work had dropped, inclosing the Spaniard and herself, cutting them off from all others. The light touch of his cloak seemed a mountain weight upon her. She did not dare look at him, lest she should betray herself. For she felt his great, dark eyes upon her, burning into her very soul.

The last member of the party had arrived; another moment, and they would start. Another moment, and should the Judge fail her, she was lost! Her breath came painfully quick, her eyes, full of dreadful expectancy, were fixed upon the door.

"Had he forgotten? Was she forsaken?"

The party was leaving. Don Carara whispered, in a low, passionate tone:


"Come, Nellie, my own, this night my bride."

Her face was ghastly; her eyes large and wild with terror. Oh God! was she lost?

Judge Hasbrook stood in the doorway.

A low, suppressed cry of joy; a mist gathered before her; she reeled, and lay lifeless in Don Carara's arms.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

HE pale moon shone full and bright; the river lay beneath, a sheet of crystal, glistening in its beams. It was a scene worthy of Fairyland. The gay skaters seemed like shadows at play, flitting over its glossy surface; now shooting forward in straight lines, sweeping in growing circles, gliding swiftly backward, and now swaying to and fro, in graceful curves, the very "poetry of motion." The air was still and clear, and the occasional bursts of merry laughter from parties further down the stream, chimed in perfect harmony with that of the group nearer by. Nellie, though she sped lightly over the ice, bore with her a heavy heart. It was a week since the night of her dreadful agony, and in all that while she had not for one moment seen the Spaniard alone. To-night he sought her hand the moment she stepped upon the ice. She drew it away, very kindly though, saying,

"I feel more independent skating alone."

He cast a sad, reproachful glance upon her, and glided silently by her side. Then Charley joined her on the other side, while the exquisite Mr. Clifford cut circle after circle around their swaying path. Nellie joined his frolic and they chased each

other in quick succession, like the eddying circles of a summer stream. In their whirling progress they swept past Mr. Hartley, who was tightening one of Clara Hasbrook's straps. That young lady was always having a strap tightened. The fault doubtless lay in the small foot and slender ankle.

Wherever Nellie went, Don Carara followed her, and all the while she felt his great reproachful eyes, that had grown so full of mad, wild idolatry, fixed on her face, and the dread and superstition that had been hovering over her for weeks, to-night settled down upon her heart with a mountain's weight.

Her sadness and dread acted strangely on her that night. It made her brilliant, daring, reckless. She flew over the ice with lightning speed, pursued by a train of admirers. She had never been so sparkling, so fascinating before. Her skating was unsurpassed, her movements the perfection of grace. She seemed to bear a fairy charm about her, that attracted all to her side; even the ladies threw aside their jealousy, and yielded her the palm, which she carried with such a grace, almost gladly.

But still Mr. Hartley came not near her, keeping close to Clara Hasbrook. Many a neglected beauty wondered to her neighbor, what Mr. Hartley could find attractive in Clara Hasbrook.

After a while, a weary look crept into Nellie's eyes; her conversation flagged, and she cast many a remorseful, almost terrified look on Don Carara, who had quitted her side, and hovered in sullen silence a short distance from the group.

Did none see that remorseful, terrified look on Nellie's face? None heeded it, but more than one whispered softly, pityingly, to his own heart,

"Poor Don Carara!

'Thou art no more as thou hast been.'"

Heart! heart! beware! take warning, lest thou think too much of the beautiful Nellie!"

Fred alone saw the increasing weariness and sadness in her face; he drew nearer to her side, took her hand, and the next moment the group looked wonderingly at each other in the silence which her absence had dropped upon them. But they soon rallied, and more than one neglected damsel had cause to look upon Fred Hasbrook as her benefactor.

It seemed good to Nellie to be alone with Fred. She did not know before to-night how flattery could tire her, and then he was taking her beyond the reach of Don Carara's restless, reproachful eyes.

Onward they swept down the stream, leaving the gay skaters behind them. Suddenly, she heard the quick cut of skates on the ice behind them. She turned quickly, dreading lest it was Don Carara, but farther up the stream she saw his tall form and flowing Spanish cloak, and she turned again to Fred with a feeling of relief. But still she heard the quick sweeps of the skates in pursuit, and with curiosity to see whom it was thus following them, she drew away her hand, and cutting several circles, that her purpose might not be discovered, looked back upon the skater, who, as if suspecting her

design, took a backward motion. She knew not the slight, graceful form, wrapped in skater's costume, with a velvet tasselled cap upon his head. So she again joined Fred, thinking he was a stranger, who had mistaken them for some of his party. As they continued their onward course, the mysterious stranger again advanced. Nellie wondered at his persistence, but soon forgot all about him, never thinking of him again until they joined a group of pleasure-seekers, and heard their numerous queries and speculations, as to whom this mysterious skater, who was thus haunting their party, could be.

He had been among them all the evening, now mingling with one group, now with another, but never giving an opportunity for being addressed. Shading his face with his flowing costume, and wearing his velvet cap low-drawn over his brow. At length, as if having discovered that he was the object of remark, he withdrew from the party, and now would disappear altogether, and again would be seen hovering at a more distant portion of the stream.

Presently Mr. Shelbourne challenged Nellie to a race; she accepted, following him to the starting point, where, standing in a line, were the competitors, six in number. The color which the bracing exercise had brought to her cheeks, deepened, when she found that her immediate companion was Mr. Hartley, and pretending to be unconscious of his presence, she devoted her attention to Mr. Shelbourne. He did not see her at first; he was

talking to Clara Hasbrook, who was also one of the racers; but when he did, he said in an indifferent tone:

"Ah! Nellie, where have you kept yourself all the evening? I believe I have seen nothing of you."

She replied coolly, that she believed not, and then turned haughtily from him.

"Should she draw back? decline the race? No! it would not do; and then she would like to try her skill with Clara Hasbrook. She did not fear her rivalry on the ice.

The word was given, and like arrows from their bows, the skaters shot forward. Their course lay up the stream where it would be unbroken. Onward they flew, the six for a while forming an unbroken line. But now one has gained the lead, and again he is joined by another, and another, until a second line is formed, just half the length of the first. Quickly they speed forward; again the line is broken, and but two are left to contest the field. Swifter and swifter they glide over the glassy surface. They have left the others far behind, out of sight in the bend of the stream. They dream not of pausing, the race *must* be won. A quarter, half, three quarters of a mile slips under their feet, and still they stay not. At length one with a swifter sweep gains the lead; the other presses forward, vainly trying to gain the lost distance; it increases every moment; so, pausing in her onward flight, she stands still, chagrin and admiration blending in her

face, as she watches the graceful, rapid movements of the victorious skater. Now he cuts a rapid curve, turns in his course, and now joins her, uncovering his bowed head with a triumphant fascinating glance.

"Where had she seen it before?" was her mental question, as she said:

"I yield you the laurels, Mr. Hartley."

He gave her a peculiar look as he replied:

"Try it again, Nellie; 'the third time is the charm,' you know."

She was going to ask what he meant, but he prevented her by saying:

"I never raced with one of fleetier foot. You must have Mercury wings attached to your ankles; let me see if you haven't."

She gave a little pleased laugh at the compliment, but made no motion to grant the request, only turning on a backward course. He kept by her side and cast more than one admiring glance at the small, prettily shaped feet, that put themselves forward in swift, graceful succession. Perhaps he did it to tease her—perhaps he was looking for the wings. They soon reached the other members of the party, Clara Hasbrook being the first to join them; she had kept up with them as long as she could, then full of jealousy for Nellie, and determined not to leave her alone with Mr. Hartley any longer than possible, had followed in their wake.

She greeted Mr. Hartley with her sweetest smile, saying, enraptured:

"I am in love with your skating!" The voice

sounded very much as if she would like to have said:

"I am in love with you!" and then turning to Nellie, and in her cutting way, quite loud enough for Mr. Hartley to hear:

"Why, I am astonished at your strength, Nellie; it is equal to that of a man."

Nellie made no reply save a haughty curl of the lip; the next moment she drew apart from the party, swaying to and fro alone by herself.

"What had made her continue that race? She would give worlds if she had not." Aye! experience is a cruel teacher.

As she swayed thus, the light form of the unknown skater glided near her; she was unconscious of his presence. One hand was pressed over her eyes as if to keep back the tears of disappointment and chagrin; the other was suddenly taken, and grasped so tightly as to make her quiver with pain. Don Carara was by her side. His large, lustrous eyes were full of fierce idolatry; his entire face had changed as if some sudden spasm had passed over it. Mute, by the charm of terror, her hand lay passive in his clasp. A death-like shiver ran over her, as he drew a stiletto from beneath his cloak, and whispered in a voice passion had made hard and cold:

"Come with me, now, Nellie, or I will pierce my heart!"

Faint and powerless, she suffered him to bear her forward. He almost carried her in his swift

motion, and now they were beyond the skaters on a portion of the stream that Nellie knew not. He paused there, and still holding her hand tightly, looked down upon her with his ghastly face.

"Nellie! Nellie Holmes! you shall not torment me longer, and tear my heart out piece by piece. God knows I love you madly, sinfully. This night you shall be my bride. I swear it! Say the word that makes you mine, Nellie, say it! What, silent?" as she made no reply. "Then you love another; you love the lord of Malbrook. Ah! I knew you could not deny it!" fiercely, as she turned her white face from him.

A livid, steely look gathered over his face, as he whispered in her ear:

"Will you love him all the same, when I tell you he has a wife? Will you, Nellie Holmes?"

Her hand fell powerless; her heart ceased its beating, and her face grew deadly in its paleness, as she almost shrieked:

"It is false!" That white, steely look increased, as he again whispered:

"Have you never heard of Madge?"

She gasped for breath; faintness dimmed her eyes; he took her in his arms, and kissing with hot lips her pallid brow, exclaimed, passionately,

"Oh Nellie, Nellie! come with me to my beautiful Spain! Kill me, or say you love me!"

There was a low moan in the air—the mysterious skater stood before them—the mantle was dropped, the velvet cap pushed from the brow, disclosing a



female face, beautiful in its anguish. The large, sorrowful eyes, drooping with woe, were bent with a pleading expression on them for one moment; the next she was gone. Nellie, as seized with sudden strength, tore herself from Don Carara's arms, exclaiming:

"The miniature! the ravine!" Don Carara, ghastlier than ever, with desperation in his every tone, cried, fiercely:

"Nellie, Nellie! come to me!"

"Never!" cried she, pausing an instant in her flight. He sprang toward her. There was a loud crash; a splashing of water; a low gurgling sound; a shriek pierced the still air, and all was silent as the grave.

The chain was broken. The doom had fallen.

## CHAPTER XXVII.



AND the gay world danced on, and Don Carara was forgotten. Occasionally, when earth's denizens would look upon his empty place in the resorts of wealth and fashion, they would draw a sigh, and shiver a little at the thought, how soon they, too, would be gone, and "the place thereof know them no more."

Was Don Carara forgotten by all? Did none ever think of him? Aye! one did, for before the dark waters went over him, he had crushed the life from one young heart.

Did none see that the cheek was pale, excepting when flushed by excitement? None guess the piquant remarks, the gay laugh, covered a smothered sigh, a young heart all crushed and aching?

"Oh heart! oh heavy heart!  
Why sigh'st thou without breaking."

Sometimes in the light dance, when her step would grow weary, one would wonder to his partner,

"What had made Nellie Holmes so fearfully white? Whether after all she did love the Spaniard?"

And then the other would answer "That if she she did, it was but just punishment, for she had

treated him cruelly, sinfully, returning his love, which amounted to mad idolatry, sometimes with encouraging smiles; sometimes with cruel coldness. She had made his life one of torment, she deserved to suffer for her heartless coquetry."

None dreamt that it was other than sorrow for Don Carara's death, that had blanched her cheek, and stolen the happy light from her eye. Clemency alone suspected that it was not for the Spaniard that the life had crept out of her mistress's heart, and her soliloquy was:

"Poor child! There is something don't set good on her mind like. I reckon maybe it'll all get cleared straight afore long, and thank the good Lord that Jew is dead, anyhow. It was him that was killin' her by wee bits."

Mr. Hartley again came often to Judge Hasbrook's, and the world had it again, that Clara Hasbrook was the attraction, and Clara smiled assentingly when the world said it.

Mr. Hartley's manner to Nellie had changed since that dreadful night. He saw that she was in trouble, and were he a man, should he stand by and give no token of sympathy? Perhaps he, too, suffered? One thing was certain, very often when talking to Clara Hasbrook, he would turn his eyes on Nellie, and there was an expression in them that Clara Hasbrook did not like.

People said that Nellie's treatment of him was unaccountable. She was freezing; avoiding him whenever it was possible. But Mr. Hartley paid no

attention to it, treating her ever with the greatest kindness. He never mentioned Don Carara; never spoke of Malbrook; the place seemed to have faded out of his mind. Nellie was oftenest with Fred, in her trouble. She unconsciously turned to him for sympathy, asking none save what the eye expressed. He seemed to have devoted his life to her, and the cloud that had so long rested on his brow disappeared, and his smiles had more than their wonted brightness. He was hugging to his bosom a hope—a vain, delusive, infatuated hope. All the while Charley wrote in his life journal, and each day grew kinder and more attentive to his brother. Did he see into the future? Was Charley Hasbrook a prophet, as well as a philosopher?

And so the weeks rolled by, each bringing its round of gaieties, each adding to Nellie's burden, and making it the harder to bear.

She longed for quiet, longed to be alone, where she should not see Mr. Hartley; where Clara Hasbrook could not watch her; and all the while her heart's love and sympathy gathered about that little miniature. She longed again to see that beautiful creature; to tell her that their fates were one, and how that her own name was linked with hers in her deserted boudoir at Malbrook.

She could not understand it all; she only knew that he to whom she had given her heart's homage was false; only knew that for all that, she loved him still—loved him madly, sinfully now, for he had a wife. God help her! it was very pitiful. All the

while added to this great sorrow, was the sharp, unfeeling cry of conscience, saying:

"The miniature is not yours; return it to its rightful owner." And then, in her anguish, she would imagine that that voice took a soft, pleading tone like Madge's voice, imploring her to restore the miniature. But she could not part with it; could not tell him that she knew that he was false. Ever she wore it about her, and often when alone, and many times in the night watches, she would look upon it with almost as sorrowful eyes as Madge's own.

Very often in the night, she would think of Don Carara, how he had loved her, and she would wring her hands in agony at the remembrance of the pain she had caused, and would turn paler still with terror at the recollection of that dreadful night.

"Why had he loved her? Or why could she not have returned that love?" and her lips quivered as she remembered how he had pleaded with her to say she loved him *only once*. Oh, that on that dreadful night she, too, might have gone down into the dark waters. Was God only a God of justice; had he no mercy?" and all this while she was forced to cover, by a gay exterior, her suffering. So that the cold, questioning eyes of the world, might not see but that she was happy. Whether in the dance, the place of amusement, or in her night vigils, did the voice of conscience cry,

"Restore the miniature."

And why did she retain it? Was it alone that

she was loth to part with it? alone that she dreaded telling him she knew that he was false?

No! while the heart beats, hope lives, be it ever so faint. She seemed to live by that little hope, and it was the dread that he would snatch it from her, that deterred her.

One morning, about a month after Don Carara's death, she was sitting in the library alone, looking at Madge's miniature again. Looking at it with a sad, earnest expression, when she experienced the uneasiness one always does, when another is watching one. She glanced up; Mr. Hartley was standing directly opposite her. She colored, and covered the miniature quickly with her hand.

Mr. Hartley, evidently thinking it was Don Carara's picture, and pitying her embarrassment, went over to the window, turning his back to her. A moment she was silent, then the thought occurring to her that he had mistaken it for Don Carara's picture, she arose, and on the impulse of the moment, went over to where he stood, placed the open miniature in his hand, and said, coldly:

"I believe this is yours, sir."

She grew faint as she saw him start, and turn deathly pale. He was silent a moment, then demanded, sternly,

"What do you know of this? Who gave it to you? Tell me instantly, and truly, Nellie Holmes!"

Her eyes flashed, her lip curled, and raising her head proudly, she replied:

"I am not accustomed to telling anything but the

truth." Then added, freezingly: "No one gave it me. I found it in the ravine at Malbrook, where it was dropped by the original, months ago."

"By the original! months ago! I wish I had known this sooner, Nellie," in a softened manner, and with a very troubled face. Then taking a card from his pocket, and writing an apology on it for Clara Hasbrook—for he had engaged to ride with her that morning—he gave it to Nellie, requesting her to hand it to Miss Hasbrook, and immediately left the room.

Nellie went to the window, saw him spring in to his buggy, and give his horse free rein; watched him out of sight in the crowd, then turned white and trembling from the window. He had deprived her of all hope. The room spun round, all objects blended into one great blank. She staggered toward the sofa, but ere she reached it, sank to the floor, and for one moment, to her the world *was not*—all was oblivion. But the Maker touched, with His life-giving hand, the heart that he had formed, and it renewed its beating, sending the life-blood flowing once more through the veins. She drew a long breath—it was more a sigh—and opened her eyes. Her head was pillowed on Clemancy's lap, whose face was bent anxiously over her, almost as pale from fright as her own. She exclaimed, joyfully, when Nellie opened her eyes,

"Thank the Lord! and I hope to be forgiven every thing wicked I ever said! Just lie still, Miss Nel-

lie, and let me carry you right to your room; you have been sick, like."

"No, no, Clemancy. I will lie on the sofa just a moment," accepting the maid's assistance that far. "Don't say anything about this, Clemancy. I stood at the window too long, that was all—that was all," repeating it as if to assure herself that it *was* all; but that dull aching at her heart, that had suddenly grown into a sharp, hard pain, cruelly testified that it *was not* all.

"Yes," said Clemancy, cheerfully, "that is just what I was saying to myself when you came to, that you had stood at the window too long, like, and I do declare I'm too thankful that I chanced to be passing the door."

A moment after, Nellie rose to seek her room. As she was passing to the door, the card that Mr. Hartley had left for Clara Hasbrook, attracted her attention. Her voice was freezing, as she bade Clemancy take it to Miss Hasbrook. The maid took it with a very significant "Umph!" and when she had seen Nellie lying on the bed, and had given her a glass of wine, she started to do her bidding, muttering:

"There, I just knew that smooth-faced hippercrit had something to do with it! Gracious! but I'd like to tell somebody how I hated her! I'd give a thundering sight more than I could tell for a sight of Cris. Sakes! but I wish we were all safe back at Malbrook. 'Pears as if everything had got kicked up, like; even Mr. Hartley acts bedazzled. I hoped

when that Jew died, we'd all git straight, but Judy scratch! it is crookeder 'an ever!"

She looked black as a thunder-cloud when she handed the card to Clara, and answered the young lady's numerous questions—as to why Mr. Hartley did wait? and whether he had not left any other message? With a laconic "Nothing, miss," and then left, grinning comfortably at the young lady's puzzled, dissatisfied expression.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.



MR. HARTLEY was sitting by a comfortable fire in his elegant room at the hotel, reading the morning paper. It did not seem to contain much interest, for he soon cast it aside, and sat looking into the fire with the expression one always wears when having a studying cap on. There was a knock at the door. A waiter entered carrying a salver full of letters, and very soon Mr. Hartley was engaged in their contents. They were very quickly all read, excepting two, which had lain at the bottom of the pile. He took them up, and seeing that one was in his sister's hand, opened it, laying the other on his knee without looking at it.

We will look over his shoulder.

"DEAR ROBERT: I am very uneasy about Nellie. Clemancy writes me that she is not at all well, though she does not complain. She says she is very pale, and Robert, I am afraid there is something troubling the dear child. I want you to bring her home. You must find some excuse for coming, and don't let her know I have told you this, or she will not come at all. I have written her that I am lonely, and want her a little while. You must manage it somehow, I don't know how, but you can always do what you want to. I will expect you in a day or two. Do not disappoint me. Puss sends love.

Mr. Hartley looked troubled, and sat long by the

fire with his hand shading his eyes. At length he drew out his watch; it was eleven o'clock--time for morning calls. He would see Nellie immediately. He arose, and as he did so, the unopened letter fell to his feet. He picked it up and opened it.

What was there in that delicate sheet of note paper--what in those running pen-marks, that blanched his cheek, and made his eyes first flash fiercely, then soften into sadness? One moment he pondered; the next was on his way to Judge Hasbrook's. The ladies were in the drawing-room; Clara, in the most graceful of positions, with the toe of one of her small slippers just peeping from beneath her cashmere morning-dress, Aunt Lucet, as ever, rattling the dice, and Nellie, half concealed by the drapery of the window, was looking out on the busy world beneath, looking with that "far-off look" as we heard one call it once, that showed very plainly her thoughts were far absent from the objects on which her eyes rested.

She was going home; that was her all absorbing thought. Another day and she would be with her aunt and May; another day and she would leave the tiring, worrying city. She longed for quiet and rest.

She heard Mr. Hartley enter, and Clara's sweet good morning, but did not move. He saw her, came over to shake hands with her, and then took a seat near her; so Clara Hasbrook was forced to relinquish her graceful position. She came all smiles, and said with well assumed concern:

"Isn't it too bad, Mr. Hartley! Nellie leaves us to-morrow. Mrs. Holmes has written for her, and the naughty girl is so tired of us, that she will not stay a day longer than to-morrow. Charley is going to accompany her."

"That will not be necessary," said he; then turning to Nellie, continued;

"Business calls me home to-morrow. I have made all my necessary arrangements. Might I have the pleasure of taking you?" Nellie's heart sank. One of her greatest wishes for going to Malbrook, was to avoid Mr. Hartley. But Clara Hasbrook's eyes were on her, so she said with an effort, "Certainly, and that it would save Charley the trouble."

Clara's brow clouded, and her lips set themselves together in a way that said very plainly, it should not be.

She forgot that she had another to contend with than Nellie. Her next remark was made in a tone that revealed none of her concealed chagrin.

"I have been trying to convince Nellie that she will miss us more than she thinks, and have even tried to coax her to let me share Malbrook's quiet with her, the short time she intends to remain." Nellie's eyes flashed at the downright falsehood. Mr. Hartley was perfectly quiet, not giving the invitation Clara evidently expected. Had he intended it, Nellie gave him no opportunity.

She would not have Clara Hasbrook to watch her every moment, and destroy her promised rest, so she said coldly.

"I would hardly be so selfish as to deprive you of the pleasure this coming week promises. I fear *you* would find Malbrook cheerless at this season."

"You cannot expect me to enjoy the coming week when conscious of your loneliness." In a tone of gentlest reproach.

"You need give yourself no unhappiness on my account," replied Nellie haughtily; then added, in a tone that told more of longing than she was aware:

"I shall be with Aunt Amy." There was a pleased expression in Mr. Hartley eyes. Clara caught the look and bit her lips in annoyance, then asked, with assumed carelessness.

"How long do you anticipate remaining at Malbrook, Mr. Hartley?" adding insinuatingly, "I hope Nellie is not going to deprive us of your society long; we shall miss you sadly."

He took no notice of the latter part of her remark, nor glanced at Nellie, who was giving Clara a freezing look, but replied reservedly:

"I cannot tell how long I shall be absent; my business is urgent; I may remain but a night."

Clara drew a breath of relief; her face was beaming as she said, with a joyfulness she made no effort to conceal.

"Oh! I am so glad. I hope your business may prove even more urgent than you think for, if it will only give us the pleasure of your society."

He made no reply; but arose to leave, telling Nellie that he would be at the door with his carriage to-morrow afternoon, at five o'clock.

"There is no necessity for that, Mr. Hartley, our carriage will be in readiness," said Clara.

He thanked her, but said he preferred his own, as he had some baggage to remove from the hotel.

"We shall see you this evening," said Clara, eagerly.

He said "no, he had engagements," and left.

Nellie went immediately to her own room, while Clara stood at the window and watched Mr. Hartley until he was out of sight, and as she watched, thought—

"He will not stay but one night, thanks to his urgent business. But what had made Mrs. Holmes so anxious to see Nellie? she believed that Clemency had something to do with it; she couldn't bear that girl, she was as deep as Satan. She should not go home with Nellie; of that she was determined; she would do harm if she went, she was confident."

"What are you doing at that window so long, Clara?" asked Aunt Lucet, curiously.

Clara deigned no reply, but left the window, and the room, while Aunt Lucet called after her:

"You are great girls! Who do you expect to entertain the rest of your callers?"

The next day, at the appointed time Nellie was ready, waiting in the drawing-room.

"It seems to me you are very anxious to leave us, Nellie," said Charley, glancing at his watch.

"Why, it is five o'clock," said she, going to the window and looking out with ill-concealed impatience.



"I hope you will bring some red cheeks back with you; you have frightened me with your white face, lately," said the Judge, drawing her to his knee, and pinching her cheeks. Nellie's eyes were full of tears, which by dint of great effort, she forced back. The Judge changed the pinch into a half caress, and said, in a low, kind tone:

"Poor child, you are homesick! I might have known it long ago; and you will like us all the better after being away awhile."

Clara had taken Nellie's place at the window; and every now and then she would turn and say, with that little significant, heartless laugh:

"I am afraid you are doomed to disappointment, Nellie. Mr. Hartley seems careless of his promises to fair ladies!" and Charley would ask, sneeringly:

"Do you speak from experience, sis?"

"Nellie, what will you do with yourself, all the long evenings?" asked Aunt Lucet.

"Oh! she will get along nicely; Mr. Hartley will be home occasionally," said Clara, with marked emphasis on the occasionally, and smiling all over her face. Nellie deigned no reply, while Charley said, provokingly:

"I fear you'll not fare so nicely, sis."

Clara was on the point of retorting, when Fred entered, followed immediately by Mr. Hartley. The anger in Clara's face was veiled beneath the sweetest of smiles. Charley was no match for her deceit; her hypocrisy enraged him; he gave her a look that

very plainly expressed his opinion of her, and then whistled off his contempt in a tuneless tune.


"Aye! Mr. Hartley, I am so glad you have come! this child"—said the Judge, pointing to Nellie, "is dying of homesickness, and Clara has been prophesying a disappointment."

"She has proved a false prophet," said he lightly, bowing to Clara; and then added, glancing at his watch, "Make your adieux quickly, Nellie, I fear we are late; I was unexpectedly detained." They were speedily made, and Nellie was soon in the carriage. As Mr. Hartley stepped in after her, Clara called out:

"We shall see you to-morrow evening, at our soirée, Mr. Hartley."

He said "it was doubtful," and bowing, while Nellie kissed her hand to the Judge, and gave a bright, good-bye smile to Clemency, who was standing disconsolately at one of the windows, Clara Hasbrook having succeeded in detaining her as a kind of hostage for Nellie's speedy return, they drove off.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

HE time dragged slowly at Malbrook. Nellie had been home but a few days, though they seemed like as many years. There had been a heavy snow-storm that confined her to the house, and she was most of the time alone. There was evidently something on Mrs. Holmes's mind, and she had worried herself into one of her long wearing headaches; Miss Perkins, May's governess for the winter, kept her a close prisoner. Occasionally the little creature would break loose, and stealing up to Nellie's side, would whisper:

"Don't you wish it was spring, and old Perks was gone, and me and you and Uncle Robert would have a good time again?"

And then Nellie would kiss her with a sigh, at the remembrance of the good times "departed never to return." She had not seen Mr. Hartley, excepting the evening he had brought her home; he had returned to the city the next morning. She tried to think that she was glad; tried to think when she spent her long evenings in the library all alone, that she didn't care even if Mr. Hartley was sitting enchained by Clara Hasbrook's conversation; but she *did* care; that was plain to be seen by the impatient tap of her foot on the carpet every time she thought

of it. Then her face would grow deathly pale, as she would remember how wicked it was for her to care; how sinful even to think of him.

It was the evening of the fourth day that she had been at home. She was alone in the library, sitting by the fire on a low ottoman. The room was dark, save from what light the great yellow streaming flames of the fire gave. All the long afternoon she had spent wandering over the house, lingering longest in the deserted boudoir, Madge's room. All day long had her grief and sorrow been welling up in her heart, until to-night it seemed as if it would break. All day she had thought and wondered of Madge; where had she gone that dark, dreadful night? What mysterious connection had there been between Don Carara and Mr. Hartley? And what did Don Carara know of Madge? Perhaps—perhaps—she had been deceived; and a quick flash of joy went over her face, only to be followed by a shade of sorrow even darker than before, by comparison, at the remembrance of the morning she restored the miniature, and his white, guilt-confirming face. Each varying thought and feeling was depicted in her face and attitude, until she grew a very Proteus; and an artist might have personified a hundred different passions from that one face—love, pride, disappointment, sorrow, remorse.

Some people hold that

"'Tis better to have loved and lost,  
Than never to have loved at all."

and they talk of a lost love being such an ennobling, purifying thing. It is all sentiment! The couplet should be reversed, and read—

“’Tis better *never* to have loved,  
Than *loved* and *lost*.”

We would like to know if one cannot be as noble with a whole, sound, merry heart, as with just a small piece of that organ, and it all torn and bleeding? If a bright joyous face does not do more good than a white, sorrowful one, that goes about like a perpetual sigh, we are not capable of judging. We would like to know if there isn't enough sorrow and disappointment in the world, without disappointment in love? We'd like to know if it isn't enough to have your *heart* a deal heavier than your *purse*? We'd like to know if it isn't enough to have people you love, dead and covered up in the cold ground, and never see them any more in *this* world? God only knows if you will in the *next*? We'd like to know if it isn't enough to find people out in all their deceits and meannesses? to grow to fairly loathing human nature, and all the while to have, within you, a wicked, fickle, deceitful heart? We'd like to know, if all this isn't enough, without going daft on sentiment, and raving about the ennobling efforts of a disappointed love?

Malbrook was very lonely. Nellie almost wished she was back in the city again. There she was with Fred, and the Judge, and Charley; and then the thought came, that perhaps that very moment,

while she was so utterly desolate, Mr. Hartley and Clara Hasbrook were enjoying a quiet *tête-à-tête*.

The thought was too much; she had been so grieved and troubled all day long; it added the one drop too much to her full cup; it overflowed, and burying her face in her hands, she cried most piteously, sobbing like a tired child.

The door opened, but she thought it was Cris with the lights, and did not move, only shading her face more effectually with her hands. But that was not Cris's step. He would not linger in the room, and stand on the hearth thus with folded arms. Those were not Cris's eyes which she knew were bent on her; nor that his voice that said, kindly—  
“Nellie—

“He oft finds present hope, who does his grief impart!”

“Help! there *was* none for her! Tell him what she was crying for? She would see herself doing it!”

So brushing away her tears, she answered impatiently, but with secret thankfulness that he wasn't that minute with Clara Hasbrook—

“That she only had the blues, it was so dismal;” and the tears sprung afresh at the thought of how very dismal it was. He half smiled.

“It is gloomy in here. Why haven't you rung for lights? Shall I do so now?” with his hand on the bell.

“You can do as you choose. I prefer it as it is.”

“It shall certainly remain so, then,” taking a chair

next her, so that the fire-light falling on her face might show it him.

"Have you been alone all day?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where was Amy?"

"She has the headache."

"It must have been lonely. What have you done with yourself?" with sympathy in his tone. She made no reply. After waiting a moment, he went on:

"I am afraid your gay life has cured you of your love for Malbrook." Her lip curled while she replied impetuously.

"A gay life! I hate it!" again a half smile lurked under his fine moustache. She saw it this time, and her face flushed at the thought. "He is not satisfied with making me miserable, but must needs make himself happy at my expense," and closing her lips firmly she determined not to say another word, but his next remark broke her resolution.

"Have you no friend who would come and make you a visit?"

"Friend! I don't know what the word means."

"Not know what it is to have a friend? Why, child, Friendship is the wine of life."

"Yes, *si qua est*," with an incredulous toss of the head. There was a look of half sadness on his face, as he replied, gravely.

"You are too young to be so skeptical, Nellie."

"He dare tell her that! He dare bid her trust in man, who first taught her to doubt!" She laughed lightly, but it was not the merry laugh of old. Mr.

Hartley noticed the difference, and the sadness in his face took a stern cast, as he asked, looking at her reproachfully.

"Have you not one friend in all the world, Nellie? So poor as that?—not one friend?"

The quick tears filled her eyes, as she replied softly:

"Yes, Aunt Amy." He thought she had misunderstood him, and continued looking at her searchingly,

"No other?"

"None," evading his glance. He looked hurt, and after a moment's silence, said:

"Perhaps you will acknowledge me a friend yet, Nellie."

"Never!" was her mental resolve, while she looked resolutely into the fire, and answered listlessly:

"Perhaps."

### CHAPTER XXX.



FEW evenings after, Nellie was again in the library in the same old seat at the fire.

All day long she had again been alone, with her sorrowful thoughts, and again, when the twilight had begun to creep over the earth, had sat down by the fire, gazing into the red coals as if seeking comfort there. There was an open book on her knee, and her lips were moving softly, as if conning something that had struck her fancy therein. They were Burns's poems. It were easy to guess which one she was conning.

"Had we never loved sae kindly,  
Had we never loved sae blindly."

Alas! "*we*," that one little word filled her eyes.

She struck it out of the poem, and after a little tossed the book impatiently on the table, and looked steadily into the fire again.

Suddenly she started; her eyes wondering, her lips parted. She heard some one talking in low earnest tones in the next room. It was Mr. Hartley's voice. She could not distinguish what he said, nor did she try; she only bent her head sorrowfully in

her hands, and listened to that voice, always so musical, to-night so sad. She almost held her breath to catch its every tone. She thought he must be reading some sad, beautiful legend, such as he had told her one night long ago, when the twilight was gathering just as it was now. But oh, it was very different. Then the summer zephyrs, so soft and gentle, laden with the perfume of a hundred flowers, and full of the low good night of the birds, stole through the lattice, about which now the drear February winds howled and moaned most mournfully; and even the sky, through which then the stars were peeping, the Storm-king now was passing; and though the voice that told the story of the spirit and the mortal was sad, it was so much sadder, and had such a sorrowful tone to-night!

Once she thought she heard a low sob, and then—was it her imagination?—the voice took a caressing, comforting tone. She raised her head, and with wondering eyes, and parted lips, listened the more intently.

That low sob—that voice, modulated to notes of sweetest sympathy—what did it mean? Was there a sorrow brooding over Malbrook? Was Mr. Hartley reading a life scene? Or did her ear deceive her, that she imagined the moaning of the wind in the chimney a sob?

The door softly opened, and little May, still and frightened, stole to her side, and raising her black eyes to Nellie's face, whispered:

"Nellie, it's all so still everywhere, and Uncle

Robert is reading something to mamma, off of a great heap of white paper, that makes her cry. What is it, Nellie?

Nellie wound her arm around the child, and kissed her, but was silent. The child, too, was perfectly still, keeping her black eyes on Nellie's face; both were listening to those sad tones, and those occasional broken sobs.

Deeper gathered the twilight; more mournfully moaned the wind; and sadder grew the voice.

Very silent were the maiden and child, while the night spread its sable, starless wing, and hovered over the earth, and the twilight fled at its approach.

Then the fire-light began to throw dark heavy shadows, and the white figures of the marble statues that graced the niches, stood, and gazed at their black reflections on the velvet at their feet. May seemed full of fear at the silence, and gathering shadows, and clung closer to Nellie, whispering:

"Nellie, ain't you afraid? Nellie made no answer, only drawing her the closer to her, and kissing her again. Long they sat thus. Darker, heavier grew the shadows; sadder grew the voice, and oftener quivered the sob. Very full of tears grew the black eyes of the child, at every sob, while she would whisper:

"Nellie, what makes mamma cry?"

And the maiden's heart would echo:

"What makes her?"

And then the voice died, and the sob, and all was silent save the soft breathing of the listeners.

Thus they lingered until May, clinging to Nellie, whispered:

"Let us go away, Nellie. I'm so afraid!" then hand in hand they left the room. The hall, for all its pendent lamps, was gloomy, spectral; and their own shadows on the oaken floor, followed them as they walked.

"Oh! Nellie, I'm so afraid!" said May, beginning to cry.

Nellie knelt down, encircling her with her arm, and whispered softly, timidly—

"Don't be afraid, May."

Just then the dining-room door opened, and the soft bright light streamed out, while Mr. Hartley came toward them, saying:

"I was just coming to see if our little girls didn't want some supper." Then seeing May crying, added kindly, leading the child into the dining-room, and taking her on his knee:

"Little Puss in tears?" Sympathy only served to draw forth her sorrow, and hiding her face on his shoulder, she sobbed,

"I want mamma."

"Mamma has the headache and has gone to bed; you shall see her in the morning."

"I want to see her now," cried the child.

"You must wait until morning, Puss," said he, kindly but firmly, while Nellie, who had been standing by, looking very much as if she was going to cry too, said softly:

"Won't you stay with me to-night, May?"

That seemed to pacify the child, for she suffered Mr. Hartley to wipe her eyes, and seat her close beside him at the table.

"Nellie, will you pour the tea?"

Reader, do you wonder that a soft, bright color flooded Nellie's white cheek, as she took her aunt's seat opposite Mr. Hartley? There was very little eating done at that tea. Mr. Hartley, though his brow was sad, talked cheerfully all the while to May, occasionally addressing Nellie. When tea was over, he gave Nellie his arm, and taking May's hand, led them to the library. Nellie sat down on a low ottoman by the fire, while May drew another to Mr. Hartley's feet, and laying her head on his knee, looked into the fire. Nellie was looking there too. They were all very quiet. Mr. Hartley looked troubled, and seemed to have forgotten them; but a long-drawn breath from May aroused him, and laying his hand on her head, he asked:

"What are you thinking about, Puss?"

"Mamma," said the little girl, with a half sob.

He smiled at her childlike longing for her mother, then told her a fairy tale, not about a *prince with yellow curls*, but one that diverted the child, and drew her eyes from the fire to his face. Nellie too listened, and as Mr. Hartley looked from one to the other of their interested faces, can one wonder that a smile mingled with sadness in his eyes. At length, when the story was told, the door opened, and Betty stood ready for May.

The child looked pleadingly into Mr. Hartley's face as he turned and said:

"You need not wait, Betty; Miss Nellie takes May to-night." May looked very grateful, and pleaded—

"Just one more story, Uncle Robert."

He granted her request, telling her one in rhyme; and smiles gathered about the child's rosy lips, and she forgot all about her grief. When it was ended Mr. Hartley arose, and drawing Nellie's harp from its corner, and uncovering it, said:

"It is your turn now, Nellie."

She took the seat he placed for her, and ran her fingers lightly over the strings to tune it, then, with her eyes on the harp, asked:

"What shall I sing?"

"My favorite."

She looked up quickly; he was watching her with his hand shading his eyes. His favorite! she knew full well which it was, though he had never told her. But should she sing it? Should she flatter him so much?

"Why don't you sing it, Nellie?" asked May.

Mr. Hartley was waiting, so again sweeping the strings, she sung the Italian love ditty she had sung the first time he had ever heard her.

Never had her voice been more clear and pure, more heavenly in its sweetness: never more touchingly sad and plaintive. It seemed as if she was pouring out her soul in a wild gush of melody.

As she sung, the color came and went in her snowy cheeks, and her eyes, from beneath their dark

lashes, now beamed with a soft lustre; now, as the song grew in depth and passion, flashed and sparkled most brilliantly. And now the song would burst into wild, passionate appeals; now sink into pleading plaintive tones, so sweet, so strangely, sadly sweet, that the heart of the listeners quivered as with pain. Had Nellie looked into Mr. Hartley's eyes then, she might have well called them *very fine eyes*, and May—her hands were clasped as if in worship, and the tears were rolling down her rosy cheeks. Her little heart was vacillating between joy and sorrow, and trembling 'neath the excess of the two.

The song ended; the voice died, growing sweeter and sweeter at its close. She seemed touched with the wild beauty of her own sad song, for her head drooped, and she cast no look at her listeners. And her listeners? they were very quiet for a little, then May, looking at Mr. Hartley, and drying her eyes with her chubby little hands, asked:

"Was her heart clear broke, Uncle Robert?"

He stroked her cheeks with a caressing movement and smiled. She had told it all in her child-way—told the power, the hidden charm of that wild gush of song.

It was Italian. The child had not understood one word, but the voice explained it; there were tears in it.

Nellie heard the little girl's question, and the lids that had drooped before, closed one moment over the eyes. Was it to press back a tear? Then looking at her watch, she arose, saying:

"Come, May."

As Mr. Hartley said good-night, he added, "Thank you, Nellie." She looked away very quickly. Long after little May was asleep, Nellie tossed restless upon her pillows, wrestling with her heart.



## CHAPTER XXXI.



IT was the last afternoon of Nellie's stay at Malbrook. Early the next morning she was to return to the city. It had been the saddest week of her life, and the loneliest. Mrs. Holmes was laid up with headache; there was evidently something greatly troubling her. She had at first opposed Nellie returning to the city, but when she said she longed for the excitement; that the monotony was killing her, she raised no further objections; but one might see, from the grieved expression on her gentle face, that she was hurt. She could make nothing of Nellie: she was so unlike herself: now so quiet, now so unnaturally gay—so impatient when questioned regarding her health. She ate little or nothing; and each morning showed very plainly that the night had been a wakeful one. Many were the anxious looks Mrs. Holmes had cast upon her, and this last afternoon of her stay, having worried her head worse, had gone to lie down.

Nellie was alone, sitting in one of the library windows, her hand supporting her head, while her eyes rested wearily on the bleak landscape. It was a

cheerless day in the latter part of February. Murky clouds covered the heavens as with a pall; the rain had fallen without intermission since the first break of day; the wind moaned most drearily around the stone walls of the old mansions, and blew in gusts against the tall protecting trees, causing them to lash it angrily with naked branches; while the ivy-vine shivered, and dropped its leaves beneath its fury. The woods bowed low beneath the gathered storm, and swayed to and fro with a bitter wailing sound. One might trace in the increasing gloom, the sinking of the hidden sun. As the night approached, the rain fell in greater torrents, and the loud howling of the wind sounded like shrieks of despair.

Nellie scarcely heeded the storm, it was so in accordance with her own thoughts; but at last, when a gust of wind dashed the rain angrily against the window, she looked upon it with more interest, taking in every feature of the landscape—the bending woods, the long sweep of earth with its lifeless vegetation, and large patches of melting sullied snow; the heavy clouds, the fierce wind, and driving rain—and traced with sad interest its similitude to her own life, so weatherbeaten, so tossed and troubled! But there was a difference, a sad difference; to-morrow's sun would dispel the gloom hanging over the earth to-day, but the sun would never rise for her. Why did God let her live? If she might only die! But now her eyes are fixed and intent, and an expression of wonder and superstition spreads over her face.

"One dead and to be laid in the cold earth on such


a day? God forgive her wicked wish. But what did it mean? The Cemetery did not lie in that direction, and such a lonely dismal funeral, with only the hearse and one carriage, and all in the beating rain.

Her face grows more intent; fear and superstition are written in its every lineament, when the funeral procession leaves the highway, and winds slowly on the road that leads to Malbrook's burying-ground. "Who could it be going to their long home? None but a Hartley was ever laid in Malbrook's burying-ground!" An ashy paleness spreads over her face; she presses her hands to her throbbing temples. "Oh! can it be? Is there one less aching heart in the cruel world?"

They have reached their destination; the carriage door opens and two gentlemen step out. She leans eagerly forward, but the driving rain hides them from her sight; by and by the storm abates; and there, beside an open grave, with bowed, uncovered head, stands Malbrook's lord. The coffin is lowered into the earth, and the wet, heavy sods fall upon it.

The night drops heavily upon the darkened air; the storm increases; heaven and earth mingle their weeping and wailing. Is it a dirge for the dead or the living?

## CHAPTER XXXII.

MPH! there she goes; I knew it! She'll draw out everything Miss Nellie has said or done for the last week, and find out just how often she's seen Mr. Hartley, and what he said to her each time. She'll do all the mischief she can, prying, white-livered thing! I wish she'd choke!"

Such was Clemancy's mental soliloquy, as the morning after Nellie's return, she encountered Clara Hasbrook entering her room, just as she was leaving it.

"Well, Nellie, how did you enjoy your stay at Malbrook? Did you tire of the quiet, you so coveted?" asked Clara; she had, as Clemancy suspected, come in on a finding-out expedition.

"No!" was the laconic reply.

"Perhaps you had more company than you anticipated," insinuatingly.

"I was alone most of the time; Aunt Amy was sick."

"You must be very fond of your own company!" with a slight sneer, and that, in her tone that said she doubted her word. She had seen Mr. Hartley but once during that week, and thought he had been at Malbrook. Nellie noticed the tone; her cheeks flushed, and she raised her head in a cold, haughty

manner. "How did you put in your evenings?" looking at her searchingly.

"Reading," shortly.

"What did you read?" trying to smooth her questions.

"Really! if I had thought you had been so interested, I would have taken down a list; as it is, I cannot remember," sarcastically.

"You couldn't have been thinking much of what you were reading," in an insinuating tone. Nellie's eyes flashed; she was silent; she was no match for Clara Hasbrook. "Of course, you have seen nothing of Mr. Hartley," impudently; the tone saying very plainly—"I have seen him every evening, so of course, you have not."

Nellie bit her lip angrily, and replied, coldly,

"He was at Malbrook twice during the week. I suppose you knew of it."

"Oh, yes, he told me," replied Clara, quickly; she did not scruple at a falsehood. Her face was gleaming; she had found out what she wanted; now she would give Nellie information, and that without questioning, too.

"You have missed the gayest week of the season."

"Indeed!" indifferently.

"Yes, we have had one party after another. I postponed our *soirée* until Wednesday evening, on Mr. Hartley's account. We had a grand time. I danced with him until I was almost tired to death, and promised to ride with him the next day, if I

wasn't too tired; he said, of course he would let me off in that case."

"Why, Wednesday was one of the evenings he spent at Malbrook," said Nellie, looking at her keenly; she changed color, but said boldly:

"Did I say Wednesday? I meant Thursday; how stupid! But you said he spent Wednesday evening with you! What did you do? Was poor dear Mrs. Holmes able to be up?" watching her closely; Nellie saw her object, and replied, coldly:

"Aunt Amy went to bed early; so did May and I."

Clara's eyes gleamed again, while she went on: "I have seen so much of Mr. Hartley this week! He has spent all his spare time with me. I really begin to fear that people will talk. Fanny Clifford says they do already," with apparent embarrassment. Nellie maintained a dignified silence.

"Don't you think it would be very dismal to live at Malbrook?" with a world of meaning implied in the question.

"I never found it so," coldly.

"I know, you have always lived there; that makes the difference; but then one who has been raised in the city," stopping abruptly, with well assumed embarrassment, as if having said more than she had intended; Nellie was silent.

"People have talked a deal about you this last week, Nellie."

"Indeed!" carelessly.

"Yes, you made a mistake in going to Malbrook."

"Ah! in what way?" haughtily.

"Nothing! only you have given gossip a treat."

Nellie was quiet, and troubled. Clara saw it, and determined to give *herself* a treat. "Yes, you convinced them that you are a 'maiden of the forlorn hope.' Nellie's cheeks flushed angrily. "You made a great blunder; you had better staid and braved it out," with a slight sneer.

"What do you mean I had better braved out? Please explain yourself! you talk in riddles!" said Nellie, freezingly.

"Now don't put on the innocent; you know well enough I was referring to your grief at Don Carara's death. But take heart, Nellie, there are other Spaniards in the world."

Nellie's eyes flashed, her cheeks burned, while she replied, impetuously:

"I have always thought you lacking in feeling, but never before, knew you were so utterly devoid of heart. You know full well I did not love Don Carara; but I could not speak so lightly of my direst foe, had death claimed him."

Clara Hasbrook's lips whitened with rage, while she replied, cuttingly:

"You did not love Don Carara? Your actions and words are at strange variance!" then added, sneeringly: "It is well you showed sorrow at his death; for with all your deep feeling, the world had pronounced you heartless; every one said you treated Don Carara outrageously!"

Nellie's lip quivered, and there were tears as well

as anger in her eyes. All this while Clemancy was wandering restlessly up and down the hall.

"Well, I wonder how long that prying hypocrite is going to stay in there; she's trying to find out a heap of things that never happened, I reckon. It beats all, how she can bedazzle every one with her oily tongue. I'm thankful for one thing: she hain't seen Mr. Hartley while Miss Nellie was gone; but he hain't been to Malbrook; I know that by Miss Nellie's face. I wonder where he *has* been? it's pesky queer! Well, thank the Lord for one thing, any way: that man of Spain is dead! It's one more trouble off the earth; and though Miss Nellie has looked like a death's head ever since, she hain't got him sticking 'round, worrying her with his great eyes. Judy Scratch! this world is a miserable, poor piece of business! it'll be good when it's smashed! But to think of that deceitful critter, staying in there all this time; I do declare it is aggravatin," and the girl increased her pace in going up and down the hall. "I wonder if she's never coming out?" stopping for a moment at the door; "Bah! I hate the very sound of her voice," going away again.

"I believe I'll go in: she's doing a heap of mischief, I know," coming back to the door again; "No I won't, either; I feel so riled up that I'm afraid I'd throw something at her—I'll go in, any way!" with her hand on the knob—"No I won't, either," taking it off again. "Sakes! What *shall* I do?" in desperation, "Miss Nellie's voice sounds all full of tears,


"I'll go in, I'm beat if I won't," and she *did* go in.

Nellie glanced at her with a relieved expression, while Clara Hasbrook looked at her disdainfully, and with a frown that very plainly said she did not like the intrusion. Clara Hasbrook was not easy before Clemancy. She, the wealthy, accomplished heiress, was restrained before a waiting-maid. She knew the girl read her, and held her in utter contempt.

Clemancy busied herself in unpacking Nellie's trunk. Clara was silent, evidently waiting for her to leave, but the girl had no such intention. She had had too much difficulty in *getting* in, to leave very suddenly, and although she did not look at Clara, there was that in her face that said very plainly:

"If you sit there all day, I'll out-sit you;" so the young lady left, with her head erect, and her lip curled disdainfully, brushing Clemancy with her skirts as she passed her.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

NE morning, not long after Nellie's return to the city, she was alone in the parlor, standing by one of the windows. Mr. Hartley came up the steps. When she saw him, she drew back, intending to leave the room before he could enter: but he saw her, and bowed, so she was obliged to remain. He entered, and came over to where she stood. He declined the chair she offered him, saying—

"I can stay but a moment. I have been trying a long time to see you alone, but have not succeeded." She looked at him questioningly; he was quiet a moment, then said, handing her, as he spoke, a scroll:

"I do not know as I do right in giving you this, Nellie; but I do it in fulfillment of a promise to its writer."

Why did she start and turn pale? and why did a dreary twilight, a sad voice, and a broken sob, rise before her as her hand touched that white scroll?

"Nellie, if I have done wrong, and been unkind in this, know that I have done it unwillingly."

He was gone. She stood alone, clasping the scroll in her hand. Only a moment she stood thus, then

went slowly to her own room, closing the door and turning the key: then threw herself into a chair with the scroll still unopened in her lap. Her heart told her what it was. She could not read it; she could not open that white roll of paper, it was so like a shroud in its whiteness; and as she looked at it, ever did she hear in imagination a low sad voice—a sob—a child's voice, whispering, "What makes mamma cry, Nellie?" And then she would see a black stormy sky, a waste of dreary landscape, an open grave. She trembled violently; her face was ashy pale: she could not bear it, this dreadful suspense. She opened the roll softly, gently. The rattling of the paper made her shiver; it sounded heartless, cruel, like the falling of earth upon a coffin. It was done at last, and on the open page was written, in girlish letters, "My Journal," and a little to one side—"Madge." We give the reader but portions of

#### THE JOURNAL.

*July 25th.*—Sixteen years old to day! I am sporting my first long dress, and have tied my curls all up into a knot. Cousin Robert makes a deal of fun of me; not that he says so much, but he gives me one of his odd looks, that the Seminary girls raved over so, and drops sly remarks about "a few years hence when"—and then he doesn't finish the sentence, but looks at my long dress, and tucked up curls, as though they explained the rest.

I don't wonder the Seminary girls raved over Cousin Robert.

*August 3rd.*—To-day we signed our betrothal, Cousin Robert and I. I feel very unhappy; not a bit as a girl should feel the first day of her engagement. Cousin Robert takes it all so matter of fact, I am sure he don't love me near as much as he should. We have been brought up so like brother and sister, and taught to look on our marriage as a matter of course. It isn't one particle romantic.

*Later in the day.*—Cousin Robert is just splendid, and as fascinating as the Seminary girls said he was. This afternoon I was in my pretty boudoir all alone, as unhappy as could be. I was standing at the window, looking at the dear old willow, where I used to play dolls. Cousin Robert had not been near me all day. I thought it very unkind, the first day of our betrothal, and was just on the point of crying about it, when some one came up behind me. I knew very well that it was Cousin Robert, for I knew his step, but I didn't let on, for I was angry at him. He waited for a few moments, then took my hand and put a ring on my first finger. Such a beautiful, beautiful ring! I never saw its equal—a solitaire diamond; so large—and so sparkling!—a queen might be proud to claim it.

Of course I told him how lovely it was. He stood watching me with his quizzical look, until I was over my raptures, then asked if I hadn't anything to give in return. Of course I knew what he meant, but I pretended I didn't. Then he said "I have a

double right to it, Madge; we are cousins, and betrothed." My cheeks flushed; I don't know why they should; he has kissed me many a time ever since I was a wee bit, but never before did I feel a kiss from Cousin Robert like that one. It was the first kiss that ever made my cheeks burn. He saw how hot they were, and laughed. Ah! truly, Cousin Robert is fascinating.

*August 6th.*—The bright mellow moonlight is flooding the room. We have just come home from the old willow. Cousin Robert calls it our trysting-tree. We carved our names in the bark to-day. I am desperately in love with Cousin Robert, he has such ways. To-night I told him what raptures the Seminary girls went into over him, he raised his eyebrows and gave me such a queer look. I just think he is more than handsome. He teases me a deal, but I don't mind it. This afternoon Aunt Hartley and I were sitting in the library at our work, when he came in and sat down beside his mother. I was in my old place, on a stool at her feet. He sat still a little; then, putting his hand over Aunt Hartley's work, said, motioning with his eyes toward me, "She will make a pretty bride, won't she, mother?" Aunt Hartley smiled, and kissed my forehead. Dear Aunt Hartley, it troubles me to see her so thin and pale.

*August 20th.*—Yesterday Cousin Robert left for college; it is his graduating year. Next week I shall go back to Madame Lagrange's. We find it very lonely; it seems as if the whole house had gone. Aunt Hartley looks thinner and paler yet since he left. She

fairly idolizes him. I am so very, very lonely without him! When I told him how much I should miss him, he looked pleased, and said, "perhaps some day I would have too much of him." I wonder if such a thing as having too much of Cousin Robert is possible. He promised to write me a long letter every week, or every day, if I would answer them.

*Aug. 22d.*—Cousins Amy and John Holmes are at Malbrook. They have come to break the first loneliness Aunt Hartley will feel, when Cousin Robert and I are both gone. I am wild to get back to the Seminary. I wonder what the girls will say to my ring. I shall not tell any one who gave it to me, without it is Carrie Hill.

*Sept. 1st.*—Back at Madame Lagrange's. It seems right good to be here again. The girls went into fits over my ring. I wonder what Cousin Robert would say to such an expression as that; he has such a way of taking me up on my extravagant speeches. Carrie Hill thought my ring the handsomest she had ever seen. All the girls wanted to know who gave it to me. I reckon they suspect, for they tease me a deal about my fascinating cousin. I didn't tell any one but Carrie Hill, though, and she promised never to tell.

*Oct. 5th.*—Oh, dear! school life is so monotonous. Study, study, until one's head aches, and then study on just the same as if it didn't. Madame Lagrange is as cross as sin—Monsieur, crosser still. I can think of nothing pleasant under the sun excepting Cousin Robert's last letter. Such letters as Cousin



Robert writes! So like himself. I showed Carrie Hill a part of one in which he described a supper, which a party of students had had that night. She thought it was splendid. There goes the bell now, for French, and I know as little about it as if it were Greek. Oh, dear! I think this is a sorry world.

Nov. —.—Carrie Hill is in love with the young Professor of the Seminary. Queer! He is handsome, I know. I reckon he is handsomer than Cousin Robert; but then he hasn't his ways, and "handsome is as handsome *does*." We had a right good time at our reception Friday evening—had a glorious dance, and flirted a deal. How grand it would be to be through school, and going into society. They say a girl's happiest days are her school days. It is all gammon. They tell me the world is cold, heartless, and fickle. I don't believe it! I long to see something of it. I wish there was a college near our Seminary. Cousin Robert tells me of how the students carry on with the young ladies of the Seminary opposite the college. It must be grand.

Nov. 22nd.—To-morrow night our *soirée* comes off. Cousin Robert writes me that he and a college chum, Puerto Roderrigo, will be in the city, and will attend. That is the best part of it. I am going to wear white, with blue ribbons. Cousin Robert told me once that white, with blue ribbons, was the only thing a Madge should *ever* wear. I wonder who that Puerto Roderrigo is? It is a love of a name, and Spanish, too, at that. A handsome Spaniard would

create something of a sensation at Madame Lagrange's. The girls will be astonished to see Cousin Robert. I told Carrie Hill, and she was ever so glad. Carrie is going to wear blue. I can hardly wait. I wonder if I will see Cousin Robert before evening; I think he might come in the afternoon. It would be dreadful to have to meet him before all the girls, and Madame Lagrange. Why, she would freeze me into such an iceberg, that he wouldn't have the slightest suspicion that it was I. I do hope he will come in the afternoon, and without his friend; it would be so pleasant to see him alone again.

Nov. 23rd.—Cousin Robert has been here, when I told him how good it was of him to come before the evening, he gave me one of his odd looks, and wanted to know if I thought he could have waited until evening. He looked perfectly magnificent, and has such an air of *distingué*—as Madame Lagrange says—about him. Madame came into the parlor while he was there, and it seemed as if she could not be polite enough to him. Somehow or other, Cousin Robert gets around everybody. Such a beautiful bouquet as he brought me! Carrie Hill went into raptures over it; and then such a delicate cluster of lilies of the valley, and bells as blue as heaven, for my hair. He is very thoughtful; he said his friend, the Spaniard, sent his respects to me. I suppose that is etiquette. I think it very pleasant; it takes away all the stranger feeling.

Night.—The *soirée* is over; Carrie Hill is asleep, but I cannot sleep. I have seen Puerto Roderrigo;



he is more than handsome; he is radiant. With such great, dark, lustrous eyes. I shall never forget them. I felt my cheeks grow hot, and a strange feeling in my heart that I never felt before, the moment they rested on me. I could not talk, but stood mute, meeting those dark eyes; there was such a soft, yearning, unsatisfied expression in them, they touched me with a sadness that I cannot overcome. Cousin Robert, the moment he had introduced us, left me alone with him, going with Madame Lagrange to be introduced to some of the pupils. Such a half hour as I spent then. It seemed as if ages of such perfect bliss as to amount almost to sadness, were crowded into that brief space of time. His home is Spain; this is the last year of his college life, another year, and he seeks his native land. When he told me of Spain, of his home beneath its sunny skies, and midst its beauteous vineyards, I could scarce contain myself for joy. When he told me that perhaps he should never see me more, he bent on me his soft, yearning eyes, and there was a look in them that made me tremble with mad joy. But this is sinful. I am wronging Cousin Robert. Carrie Hill said I flirted with the Spaniard to-night, and that Cousin Robert would be jealous. Carrie Hill knows nothing about Cousin Robert; he is too noble to even know the meaning of jealousy. Flirt with the Spaniard! Ah! he is the last person in the world whom I could ever flirt with.

*Nov. 24th.*—To-day Madame Lagrange gave us a holiday for rest. Right glad I am, for I am sure I

could not study. The girls do nothing but rave over Cousin Robert to-day. They think him far more fascinating than Puerto Roderrigo. Ah! he has never looked on them as he did on me, last night. There comes a servant with a beautiful bouquet. Who does my heart whisper it is from? not Cousin Robert. Ah! no, I knew it was not. There is a slip of paper half hidden in the flowers; my very heart trembles as I read the words: "Accept this, Madge, from me, whom the sunshine of your presence has left in deeper gloom than he ever knew before. Puerto Roderrigo! Shall I see him no more? never, never again? Oh, it is cruel! Would that I had never, never met him, and yet I would not give that short half hour with him last night for all the years of my life together. Another card. Cousin Robert is in the parlor; how can I meet him?

*Later in the day.*—Noble Cousin Robert! How could Carrie Hill think he ever could be jealous? He met me with all his old frankness; told me of his college life, talked of Malbrook, his mother and Cousin Amy, and rallied me on the time when I should wear white *without* the blue ribbons. My cheeks burned when he said it, but he misunderstood the cause. My heart misgives me, that I am sinning. He talked a deal about Puerto Roderrigo, and once asked me how I liked him. I evaded the question, and though I could not look him in the eyes, his truthful, searching eyes, and though my face flushed, he did not suspect the cause. He is so noble, and places such trust in me, and I am violating that

trust. It cuts me to the heart to think of it. He told me he would be here to-night, with Madame Lagrange's permission, and with *mine*, would bring his friend with him. Of course I could not refuse, though I feel I should have done so. I long, yet dread to meet him again. What will he say? will he come after writing that note? I fear not. Oh, if I should never see him again. My whole life seems to hang on the hope of seeing him but once more.

*Midnight.*—They have gone. I have seen them again, and have spent most of the evening by his side.

All the long evening he held me wrapt, hanging as it were on his every word and look. It were far better had I never seen him. The consciousness that in a few days I shall see him for the last time, causes a sharp cruel pain in my heart; all the beauty and gladness seem to flee out of my life. To-night he asked me if I had had a sleigh-ride yet this winter. I told him I had not; then he said there were fine prospects of sleighing to-morrow, and asked the pleasure of giving me my first ride, and then turned on me his dark eyes, with an expression that entreated me not to refuse.

I hesitated, for I did not know how Cousin Robert would like it, but he advised me to go by all means, saying he knew I would enjoy it. I could not but accept then, though I knew I did wrong. He should not have asked it.

When the evening was half over, Cousin Robert asked for Madame Lagrange. I sent for her.

Never was any one more flattered than she. Cousin

Robert knows just *when*, and *how*, to do everything. Madame Lagrange pays as much deference to him, as if he was years her senior.

Puerto Roderrigo and I were left alone the remainder of the evening. He sat on the sofa beside me, talking in his low thrilling tones, with his great eyes on my face. My breath came quicker, and the pleasure, the joy, was so exquisite, as almost to amount to pain. Once, when the evening was almost over, he referred to the flowers. I averted my face when he did so. He misunderstood me, and said in a low, hurt tone,

"Did I displease you?" I could not but turn. I met his gaze. A happy, satisfied expression stole over his face. In one little look we had acknowledged our love. I trembled at the thought, but it was too late to draw back. Oh! I was wronging Cousin Robert. But he has never loved me as Puerto Roderrigo does. It would break Aunt Hartley's heart, it has been the wish of her life. She planned it when I first went to Malbrook, a little, helpless, orphan baby. She has been like the best of mothers to me all these years, and Cousin Robert! I wish I had never been born. God forgive me, but I do wish it.

*Nov. 25th.*—He came as he had promised, and we took our talked-of ride. It were far better if we had not; for each time I see him, my heart relinquishes itself more and more into his power. We rode two hours, two beautiful, golden hours, and all the while that the horses flew over the dazzling snow, my

heart vacillated most painfully between hope and fear, joy and sorrow. To-day he told me of his love, told me what he knew too well, *my love for him*; said I need not deny it, for I showed it in my every word and look. Am I then so poor a dissembler?

I told him he must not talk to me so: reminded him of my betrothal; reminded him of how sinful I had been, in giving him even a thought. Then he tried to persuade me that I was not sinning; said that had I not acknowledged my love, had I banished him broken hearted, and in so doing broken my own heart, I would in the sight of Heaven have committed a far greater sin.

He told me that I did not wrong Cousin Robert; that he did not love me as *he* did; that he only loved me as a brother.

Then he pictured to me my after-sorrow, should I bid him leave me; told me of the remorse I would suffer—of long weary days, and for more weary nights; how the years would roll on thus, one after another, bearing me in their long toilsome course, until death should point his arrow at my heart, and I would go down to the grave, as I had lived, broken hearted; and he told me how I would wrong Cousin Robert did I let him lead me to the altar an unloving bride. Before that ride was over he had drawn from me a promise that I would be none other's bride than his, and with that promise another, that I would not tell Cousin Robert, or any one else, but would let it go on as it was, until his college year was over. I tremble now the promise

is given and recoil at the deceitful part I am to play.

Nov. 29th.—They are gone. Again I must resume my school duties. How can I do so? How can the brain accomplish aught, when the heart is in such a sad, sad tumult. I grew faint when Cousin Robert gave me his frank kind kiss, and fainter still at the recollection of another kiss that yet lay warm upon my lips. God forgive me the deceit. Madame La-grange talks a great deal of Cousin Robert; says he is the most truly aristocratic person she ever met; and the girls look enviously at the ring, that is wearing into my heart. How can I ever carry on this deceit? How write to Cousin Robert? Puerto is to write to me under an assumed name, and I must answer likewise, and go to the office for my own letters.

Oh! that there was no necessity to hide it.

Dec. 10th.—To-night I have had my first letter from Puerto Roderrigo. All this long time, it seems like very years, he has been silent. It was very cruel. But when I read his letter I forgot to reproach. Just a little while longer, and I go home to Malbrook, for the holidays. I dread them; dread deceiving Aunt Hartley, and spending a long week so alone with Cousin Robert.

Dec. 12th.—Every other day I receive long, passionate letters from Puerto Roderrigo, and once every week, kind, entertaining ones from Cousin Robert. Very often he speaks of the future; of our reunion at Malbrook; and the time when we shall

visit foreign lands together. Plans all sorts of bright and pleasant things for me, just as he has always done, even when we were bits, playing under the trysting-tree.

*Dec. 14th*—Carrie Hill tells me that I have changed; that I am not as light-hearted as I used to be; and that there has a sad look stolen in beside the joy in my eyes; she wonders at it. Ah! I am not as light-hearted as I used to be.

*Dec. 22d.*—To-morrow I leave for Malbrook. To-morrow night I shall meet Cousin Robert.

*Dec. 24th, Evening.*—Aunt Hartley is thinner and paler than ever. She startles me. All the evening she has talked to me of the summer, when Cousin Robert and I shall be united. It seems to be her only wish. Very often during the evening, she has looked at me with a longing, wistful expression, that has smitten me to the heart; this deceit is killing me.

*Night.*—He is here. I have seen him and spoken to him; my heart is in such a tumult of joy and fear, that it seems as if it would stop its quick beating. Cousin Robert, in his ever thoughtful way, remembering that Puerto's home was far away in Spain, and that his holidays would be cheerless ones, brought him here to spend them; and Aunt Hartley, in her motherly, gentle way, bade him welcome. I shall spend a week with him. What joy, what perfect joy.

*Christmas.*—It used to be the gladdest, merriest day in all the year. To-day, oh! which is uppermost, joy or sorrow? My heart almost broke when

receiving the elegant gifts Cousin Robert brought me. It seems like such gross ingratitude; I tremble when I think how much more I prize the little diamond heart Puerto Roderrigo gave me, than all Cousin Robert's costly gifts. I see a great deal of Puerto, for Cousin Robert, himself too noble for deceit, suspects none, and leaves us often alone. At every interview, Puerto makes me renew my vow to keep the secret until his college year is finished, and he is free. Ah! that it was over!

*Jan. 2d.*—This evening we were all in the library. Cousin Robert was reading aloud; he reads very beautifully. When he had finished, Aunt Hartley expressed a wish to hear a Christmas carol, and asked Puerto Roderrigo if he sang. He does not. That led them to talk of music. Cousin Robert is extravagantly fond of it. I have often thought he would be more liable to love me, if I had a beautiful voice. Never, until to-night, did I so much covet one, for Puerto also loves music; and when in reply to his question as to whether I sang, I said I did not, I thought I saw a shade of disappointment on his face. Was it fancy?

*Jan. 3d.*—This terrible deceit is destroying my life. I am growing very thin and pale. It is robbing life of all its brightness. This morning Puerto and I were alone in the library. We were standing before the fire, his arm encircled my waist. There was a firm, elastic step in the hall. Puerto left me instantly, standing opposite to me on the hearth, perfectly composed. My cheeks burned guiltily. The

door opened; Cousin Robert entered, and came and stood beside me at the fire to warm, for he had just come in. He noticed my hot cheeks, and taking them playfully between his cold hands, asked what made them burn so? I said my head ached. It was no untruth, for my temples throbbed sadly. He told me I had better see what a nap would do for it; and glad of any excuse, I left the room, and went over to my little boudoir, but not to sleep. Ah! no, I stood and watched our trysting-tree, and wished that I lie cold and dead beneath its snow-clad branches.

*Evening.*—This afternoon Aunt Hartley and I were sitting in the library; I, in my old place at her feet. Cousin Robert, and Puerto Roderrigo came in. Cousin Robert sat down beside his mother, and pointing to me, said:

"Mother, Madge has the headache; she has been studying too hard." Aunt Hartley looked at me anxiously, and smoothing my hair in her gentle way, said:

"You musn't do that, Madge."

My eyes filled. Dear Aunt Hartley! she little dreams how much harder my heart aches than my head. It is cruel in Puerto to require this of me.

*Jan 10th.*—Back at school, and the saddest, happiest week of my life gone. Carrie Hill says the sad look is growing on me. Ah! she little dreams why.

*Feb. 28th.*—To-day I have heard from Cousin Amy; she is at Malbrook. Aunt Hartley is very

ill; the doctors give no hope. To-morrow, Cousin Robert will be here, to take me home.

*March 4th.*—It is all over. Death has hovered over our home, and dropped his arrow, and there is another white gleaming stone in Malbrook's burying-ground. To-morrow Cousin Robert and I leave. He takes it very hard, though he tries to conceal his grief for Amy's and my sake. It was Aunt Hartley's dying regret, that she had not lived to see us married. God forgive the falsehood I am acting. Aunt Hartley said I must not wear black; she said "its sombre hue would chill the young heart of her child." She knew not that the chill had already crept in.

*May 5th.*—The warm spring sun, to-day, I know is shining full and bright on Malbrook's ivy-covered mansion, and its lawns are fragrant with the odor of spring flowers. The thought should bring sunshine to my heart, where it only casts a shadow. For each bright day reminds me, that the time is rapidly approaching, when Cousin Robert shall seek to lead me to the altar. In every letter I tell Puerto of my sorrow, and fear of his disappointment; tell him that I know not how I shall ever raise courage to undeceive Cousin Robert; and in each reply he seeks to soothe my fears, and bids me trust it all to him, chiding me for my lack of faith. Cousin Robert has invited him to stay with us at Malbrook, until the wedding is over. Puerto thinks he dreads being alone with his sorrow. I dread to think how doubly alone he will one day be.

*June.*—Home again. Cousin Robert is with me. Puerto will be here in a few days; they seem centuries. Cousin Robert, as every one expected, graduated with highest honors; his Valedictory made the walls of the old college fairly quiver with applause.

*June 20th.*—He is here. I was in the maple grove when he came, and he found me there. Before we had left the grove, he had drawn from me a renewal of my vow, to hide everything. 'Tis cruel, wicked to Cousin Robert in his sorrow.

*July —th.*—They are making my bridal dress. One short month more, and—oh God! what will it bring? I sometimes think Cousin Robert is beginning to suspect. He looks at me with a troubled, searching expression, very often. Yesterday afternoon he asked me to go to our trysting-tree. He was very quiet during the walk, and I could not talk.

While there, Puerto Roderrigo passed, and seeing us, joined us. I thought Cousin Robert looked annoyed. Our names in the bark attracted Puerto's attention, and he cut his there too, but not so near to mine as Cousin Robert's.

*Aug. —th.*—I have just left Cousin Robert. We were together on the veranda. He had been unusually quiet all the evening; at last he stooped and kissed my brow in his kind way, and said: "Tomorrow, Madge, you will wear white without the blue ribbons, and *my* bride shall wear pearls in her hair," and as he spoke he laid a coronet, necklace, and bracelet of pearls in my lap. I know not what I did or said; I only know that my eyes were very

full of tears, and a few moments after I left him, and came here to my boudoir window.

To-morrow, when he seeks his bride, he will not find her. It is bitter, cruel, to leave him thus, but I have vowed before God to do it. I will write him a note, and beg and implore him to forgive his cruel Madge, and I will leave it with the pearls and diamond right here where I have cut my name.

*Later.*—It is almost midnight; a few minutes more, and I shall meet him 'neath the trysting-tree.

*Aug. —th.*—Standing on the deck of an ocean-bound steamer, with Puerto Roderrigo by my side, my hand on his arm, where it has perfect right to rest now, and his dear voice whispering low in my ear—"My bride!"—and chiding me for my sorrow for Cousin Robert.

SPAIN, *Aug. —th.*—The beauteous Spanish sky smiles down upon its well-beloved land, but in its smiling brings no sunshine to my sad heart. Aunt Hartley, on whose grave the flowers of many summers have bloomed and faded, could no longer call me her blue-eyed hoyden, her gladsome Madge. Four long years of mingled joy and sorrow, but with the sorrow wiping out all, save the *recollection* of the joy, have fled since I left my Malbrook home, and to-day I stand 'neath Spain's sunny sky, all unloved, all broken-hearted. Puerto Roderrigo is very, very unkind; aye, more than that, he is cruel, never coming near me for days, weeks, and sometimes months, and yet I love him more madly, more passionately, every day. Oh, that my heart would

break, and cease its sad beating. At times I am cold and distant, and then again I beg and implore him on my knees to love me once more. But it is all of no avail. He *never, never* loved me; 'twas but a wild, fickle fancy that made him seek me for a bride.

*One year later.*—I have seen Cousin Robert, but he did not see me. I was in Madrid; he was there too; all these long years he has wandered in foreign lands, driven from his home by me. He has changed but little; he looks older; his shoulders are broader, and he wears a moustache, but his expression is the same, only his long sojourn has given him a foreign air. How I longed to fly to him. I fear I should have done so, had not the crowd at that moment hidden him from me. It is better thus; my pride would not have let him see my disgrace, see that I am a forsaken wife.

*Sept.—th.*—Puerto's great uncle is dead. He left him his estate and title. To-day, he bid me no longer call him Puerto, but Don Carara. He was kinder to me to-day than he has been for years.

*June 1st.*—Ten long years have passed, and once again I stand on my native soil, but the thought sends no thrill through my crushed, bleeding heart. Cousin Robert, too, is home. I saw his name in a list of arrivals. It is strange we should have sought our father-land so at the same time, and stranger still that Don Carara should have brought me here. When I asked him why he came, he told me he wanted a change. Perhaps he thought that if he brought me

to my native land, with all my sorrow, I would die the sooner.

*June 5th.*—Yesterday, we visited Malbrook, but not its inmates. I had meant to go alone, but Don Carara found it out, and would not let me. He feared, perhaps, that I would betray him. Ah! he little knows the pride of an unloved wife! We were in the ravine, beside its cave. When there, I felt I could not leave without seeing Cousin Robert and Amy, and her little one, and the dear old home, and I fell on my knees, beseeching Don Carara to let me go but a moment; but just then he motioned me to lie silent, and turning to learn the cause, I saw a beautiful maiden, with the sunlight streaming down on her golden-brown hair, her rosy lips parted, and wonder in her eyes; the next moment Puerto drew me into the cave.

*July 5th.*—Don Carara, since that day at Malbrook, has done nothing but rave over the maiden of the ravine. It is strange that jealousy yet has power to wring my heart.

*July 20th.*—To-day, I stole back to Malbrook, intending to drop my journal at the trysting-tree, for I feel I cannot live long, and I could not die in peace, if Cousin Robert should never read my life-history. Just as I had reached the tree, and was about to drop the journal, I saw beneath the spreading branches, the beautiful maiden of the ravine. I fled. She called out to know who was there, but I paused not.

*Aug.—th.*—Yesterday Don Carara asked me to go to the Malbrook ravine again; he said he longed



once more to see its beautiful enchantress. He evidently expected me to be angry, and refuse, and I don't know but I should, if it had not been for my unconquerable desire to see the place once more. I feel now that I have seen it for the last time. Again, as before, I prayed him to let me go to the house. Again we saw the maiden, and Don Carara again drew me into the cave; as he did so, I dropped my miniature—one of those I had painted just before Aunt Hartley died. The young creature stood still a moment, then bounded to the spot where we had stood, and picking up the miniature, looked at it, then glancing all around with a wondering, perplexed expression, and as if seized by sudden fear, fled like a startled fawn. Don Carara was very angry at me for dropping the miniature.

*Dec. —th.*—I scarcely ever see Don Carara. When he comes to me, it is with a sad, wistful look in his dark eyes. Occasionally he speaks of the maiden of the ravine. She is in the city, and though he dreams it not, I know he sees her every day. There is a hurt, sad look stealing all over his face, *such a look* as Carrie Hill told me was on my face long ago. He loves the maiden of the ravine—loves her madly, wildly, even as I love him. Oh, that I might die!

*Jan. —th.*—How shall I warn her? this beautiful maiden? How bid her beware? Don Carara has not been near me for weeks, but I watch him. He is ever at her side, at the theatre, opera—everywhere. Sometimes she looks on him coldly, sometimes with smiles. His life seems to hang on her every look

and smile, even as mine once did on his. He, too, is learning what it is to hunger and thirst for love, to beg and implore it, and have it denied. His heart, too, has become a great, aching, empty void, an unsatisfied, pining thing. The beauty has crept out of life for him too. Ah! Don Carara, thou art reaping thy reward. He does not know me in my disguise, little dreams that I am ever near him, watching his every motion. Very often I see Cousin Robert, but I do not speak to him. Don Carara has undoubtedly deceived him in regard to me. I am isolated from all the world—alone. Oh, so bitterly, utterly alone—God help me, it is very pitiful!

*Jan. —th.*—To-night there is a skating party on the river; I shall go. There has been a desperate look in Don Carara's eyes, lately. I must know the cause.

*Jan. 31st.*—It is all over, and now God is letting me die. I have sent for Cousin Robert. He to whom I gave my life, my happiness, almost my hope of heaven, is gone. God forgive my mad idolatry and be merciful even unto him. Oh, Don Carara! Don Carara!

The last page was read. Nellie, white and sorrow-stricken, buried her face in her hands and cried most bitterly.

"Madge! Oh, broken-hearted Madge, dead!"

Madge with the sorrowful eyes! It was dreadful to be dead! And Don Carara? She trembled when she thought of him. He had loved her so madly,



so sinfully, and all that while she had added sorrow to Madge's overflowing cup. The mystery was all clear now, and the Malbrook Romance lay before her, written by another hand than hers. It was Madge and Don Carara she had seen in the ravine: Madge who had startled her at the willow, and at those times when Don Carara had almost won from her the promise to be his bride, the sorrowful eyes that looked warningly into hers, were Madge's; and that night, that dreadful night, when that low moan of agony rent the still air—oh, it *was* very pitiful! And her head bent lower, and a sob parted her red lips.

And Mr. Hartley! Did she give him no thought? Ah! none ever knew the thrill of joy that pervaded her whole being when she found that he was true, and far, far more noble even, than she had ever thought him. But with that rush of joy, came a pang of pain. "How could he, who could not love the beautiful, sorrowful Madge—how could he love Clara Hasbrook?"

Then came thoughts of the old Malbrook life. Every day that she had spent there with Mr. Hartley, standing out all the more bright and beautiful by comparison with the present days. Then remorseful and wondering thoughts. Remorseful that she ever could have doubted him; that she had treated him so shamefully, rejecting even his friendship. Wondering at what he could have meant when he said, "If I have hurt you in this, know that I have not done it willingly." Had he really thought she

loved the Spaniard? and her heart thrilled at the recollection of how Madge said he loved music—"perhaps—perhaps"—But the cold, sneering face of Clara Hasbrook clouded her imagination, and dispelled the half-formed hope.


"But what had he meant that October night, when"—and her cheeks flushed at the recollection. "He had trifled with her!" and she raised her head haughtily, and dried her tears.

Aye! Nellie, you little dream the meaning of those words, "Not yet—not yet!" you forget Mr. Hartley had been deceived on that very veranda. Was it strange that he should have feared to trust? Strange that he should have said to himself:

"A winter in the world shall prove her."

You thought his manner cold that night at the opera. You forget he found Don Carara at your side. You noticed that the Spaniard's bow was almost cringing when Mr. Hartley handed him his card, but you little dreamt the conversation that was held the next morning, a conversation that led Mr. Hartley to think that Madge had slept for years 'neath Spain's sunny skies and smiling vineyards. You forget, too, the power insinuation has, the impression it makes even when one does not believe; you forget your own coldness, your own coquetry. Aye! Nellie, you are very forgetful, very unreasonable.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

LARA HASBROOK had a party that evening. Clara had never been as gay as during this season. Never given so many entertainments; never required so many elegant costumes, and her dressing-maid asserted that she had *never* before given so much time to her toilet. The maid said, "That her humble opinion was, her young lady meant to catch a husband, and she shouldn't so much wonder if it was to be Mr. Hartley."

The world was of the dressing-maid's opinion. Society pronounced Nellie Holmes radiant that evening. It said her step had never been so light in the dance; that her eyes had never sparkled so brilliantly. It thought she must carry a light, joyous heart, for all Clara Hasbrook asserted the contrary, and that perhaps after all, she had not loved the Spaniard; had not mourned his death. But perhaps she had loved and mourned, and gotten over it—he had been dead a full month, and women were fickle creatures."

"Rashly, nor oftentimes truly, doth man pass judgment on his brother."

Nellie's heart was anything but light, though a quiet joy had stolen in beside the sorrow, and as

serted its right to be there. Perhaps that was what made her step the lighter, and her eye the more sparkling. She was with Fred most of the evening, and gave him many bright smiles. The busy, talking world whispered that she had already found a substitute for the Spaniard, and over Fred's kind face, had spread a deep, happy light. Charley saw it growing there, and sighed in the seeing.

Mr. Hartley was late coming, that night. "Very late," Clara Hasbrook thought, and said so too.

"She thought it was strange, for he had promised *her* to come early." So she told many people, many times. Nellie thought it was strange too, but she was rather glad than otherwise; she dreaded meeting him. When at last he did come, as Clara glided swiftly to his side, she stole away to the deserted library, to recover herself before meeting him.

She stood by the fire looking dreamily into the burning coals, tapping her foot unconsciously on the fender. The brilliant color died out of her cheeks, leaving them snowy, and her eyes lost their sparkle in the dimmer light of the room. There was no excitement to keep her up now. Her head drooped, and a low sigh escaped her lips.

She did not hear the door open, nor was she conscious that Mr. Hartley was looking at her earnestly, from the other side of the hearth. When at last she became aware of it, she gave no start, but said very softly, without looking up:

"Mr. Hartley, might I see that miniature again?"

He replied, in a low tone:

"The picture is yours, if you wish it, Nellie; I have another like it."

She said "Thank you," very humbly.

He never mentioned Don Carara, but kept his eyes searchingly on her face. It told him no story, though, or if it did, he failed to read it right; and he too, looked into the fire, with a disappointed expression.

"Mr. Hartley," began Nellie, hesitatingly, "Where?"

Just then the door opened, and they both glanced up, as Clara Hasbrook noiselessly entered, then drew back, saying, insinuatingly:

"I beg pardon for intruding; I was not aware"—

But Nellie interrupted her, saying, coldly:

"There is no necessity for any apology. I was just going to the parlor; I am engaged for this set;" and with the stateliness of a queen, she glided from the room. Fred was seeking her, and when he led her to the head of a set, Mr. Hartley led Clara Hasbrook opposite.

"Nellie Holmes has been shockingly white, ever since Don Carara was drowned; wonder if she really liked him?" said one exquisite to another.

"I couldn't begin to say, but she's decidedly partial to Hasbrook. Guess there ain't much chance for us fellows," replied the other, giving his moustache a consolatory twirl.

"Nellie, you are so white! Are you sick?" asked Fred, looking at her anxiously, when the dance was finished.

"No! only the heat is dreadful, it kills me."

"We will go into the conservatory; it is cooler there, and there is no crowd."

He led her to the farther end of the apartment, where they were completely screened by flowers and shrubs; and bringing her a chair, stood by her side, looking earnestly into her face; then stooping, spoke to her in low, passionate tones. She started, her face growing paler still; with lips parted, and eyes full of sad wonder.

When he paused, waiting anxiously for an answer, she said sadly, penitently:

"You love me, Fred? I had always thought you were my brother;" and burying her face in her hands, she burst into tears.

A look of utter anguish passed over Fred's kind face; a moment he was silent, then laying his hand soothingly on her shoulder, pleaded:

"Let me be your brother, Nellie!"

She looked up half joyful, in her tears.

"Will you, Fred? Will you really? Oh! ever since I was a little girl, I have loved you just like a brother—But," added she, noticing the anguish in his face: "I am so sorry, so very sorry! I wish I was dead, or had never been born!" And her tears flowed afresh.

"Nellie, you musn't do so; you kill me with your tears," exclaimed Fred, excitedly. "Forget to-night. Love me as you have always done, as your brother." The ghostly looks belied the manfully spoken words.

"And you, Fred?" sobbed Nellie.

"You shall be my sister;" with assumed cheerfulness. She turned and gratefully kissed the hand that rested on her shoulder. A thrill of agony passed over him at the touch of those ruby lips; and stooping, he passionately kissed her forehead, then said, with assumed playfulness:

"That seals our compact." But as if fearing to trust his forced composure longer, he led her back to the parlor. As they entered, she whispered: "Good-night!" He did not see her again that evening. She went immediately to her room, where she threw herself all faint and tired into a chair; in a moment, Clemancy was at her side.


"Are you sick, Miss Nellie?"

"No, Clemancy, only tired. I shall not go down again to-night; if they send for me, you must frame an excuse."

Clemancy muttered something about "not wondering she was tired; hating the city, and the whole kelter pelter of everything; and wishing they were all safe at Malbrook again."

A few weeks after, Clara Hasbrook took it into her head that things would go straighter if Clemancy was out of the road; so Clemancy went back to Malbrook.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

HE warm weather had come. People in the country were enjoying June roses, and strawberries. People in the city were growing uneasy, and leaving their homes for crowded hotels at watering places, where they might show their summer's finery, never thinking about the roses. Clara Hasbrook had made up her mind that it wouldn't be safe to trust Nellie and Mr. Hartley at Malbrook yet; so she had proposed, and gotten up a party to the different fashionable summer resorts, intending before the trip was over to bring Mr. Hartley to terms.

So one Sunday morning found this same party at Saratoga. The evening before, Clara Hasbrook had asked Mr. Hartley if he wouldn't like to hear Mr. —, the Episcopal clergyman of the place; of course he answered in the affirmative; so this Sabbath morning, she came tripping down to the parlor with a look well suited to Sunday on her face, evidently expecting to find Mr. Hartley waiting for her. The beautiful expression changed somewhat, when she found Charley alone inhabited the room. He was reading, but when she entered, closed his book, and sat looking at her in his keen, scrutiniz-

ing way; she returned the look steadily, and with a slight sneer.

"I would suggest a more Sabbath-like sweetness of expression. Mr. Hartley will be in, in a moment," advised Charley. She took, and acted upon his advice, for Mr. Hartley just then entered the room.

"I don't know but I will go with you, as every one else is 'invisible,'" said Charley.

Clara gave him a look that would have withered any other than himself. He returned it with a wicked wink, while Mr. Hartley, who had seen none of the by-play, said—"They would be very happy to have him." Clara showed her disappointment and chagrin, hard as she tried to conceal them. She had calculated a deal on this walk to church, and had prepared a whole conversation, but with Charley on the other side of Mr. Hartley, she could not talk in the sweet religious strain she had intended.

Mr. Hartley was not at all inclined to be communicative; he left the entertaining all to Charley, who was in fine spirits, at having baffled his sister. He was in anything but a charitable humor, denouncing all sorts and kinds of people, hypocrites especially. Mr. Hartley seemed to like to hear Charley talk, he was so earnest, and said so exactly what he meant. There was a quiet smile on Mr. Hartley's face many times during that walk, as though he saw the application Charley intended for many of his remarks. When they reached the church, Clara, with her quiet tact, managed to have Mr. Hartley sit next her. In

very sweet tone she did make the responses, and in one sufficiently loud for Mr. Hartley to hear every word. Nothing ever irritated Charley so much as his sister's religion; it was so perfectly Pharisaical. He never attended the Episcopal Church at home, giving as his reason, that he disliked the forms, but the truth of it was, he hated to hear his sister's responses. This morning, though, he looked exceedingly annoyed. He bore it tolerably, until Clara joined in the chanting, but there was something in her singing that roused all the secret animosities in Charley's nature. She seldom sung, having only an ordinary voice, and dreading the comparison Charley delighted in drawing between it and Nellie's, but she made church an exception. As she sung, Charley fidgeted about, ran his fingers through his hair until it stood up straight and indignant at the treatment of said fingers, and at last, as if unable to endure it longer, drew a piece of paper from his pocket, and writing on it these words—

"'Tis too much proved that with devotion's visage,  
And pious action, we do sugar o'er  
The devil himself,"

placed it in the prayerbook, and requested Mr. Hartley to hand it to his sister. Mr. Hartley did so without looking at Clara; had he done so, he would have seen the paper crushed in the delicate, corn-colored kid, and that sure indication of anger, a white line gather about her mouth.

Clara did the talking on the way home. Charley,

from some unexplained cause, remaining perfectly quiet. He was watching Mr. Hartley, trying to find out what he thought of his sister's devotion and piety. Mr. Hartley's face was not easily read, but there was a deal of penetration in Charley Hasbrook's keen eyes. In the smile that lurked under the fine moustache, Charley detected a bit of scorn, and there was a certain expression in the eyes, that Charley liked right well. Mr. Hartley grew to be a perfect man in Charley Hasbrook's estimation, that morning, and when, after they had reached the hotel, and Clara had tripped up stairs to get ready for dinner, the two were left alone for a moment, Charley extended his hand, saying:

"I feel as if I should like amazingly to shake hands with you over something or other, this morning."

Mr. Hartley raised his eyebrows with an odd expression, then grasped the extended hand with so much cordiality, that Charley straightway noted down the whole affair in his life journal.

A little after, they were all at dinner.

"Where did you go to church?" asked Charley, across the table to Nellie.

"We went to the Methodist—Fred and I."

"Hear a good sermon?"

"Excellent."

"Excellent sermon from a Methodist Parson!" sneered Clara.

"He told more truths than I have heard for months!" was the earnest reply.

"Good for you, Nellie! If there is any denomination on earth I favor, it is the Methodists," said Charley.

"The Methodists!" repeated Clara, her sneer deepening.

"Yes, my dear; the Methodists. You find a deal of true religion among them. You don't find them reading off prayers, and there is far more earnestness in their shouts and amens, than in your polite Episcopal responses."

"What are your objections to the Episcopal form of prayer, Charley?" asked Mr. Hartley.

"I dislike their repetition. It is the same thing over and over every Sunday."

"That is but a poor objection. You find scarcely one minister out of a thousand, who varies his prayer. I am sure there is no more beautiful form than the Episcopal."

Clara smiled exultingly, bowing her head in assent to every word Mr. Hartley said.

"I acknowledge their beauty, and do not know but my first objection was foolish. I have better ones. It strikes me as unutterably sacrilegious, to hear people reading off prayers when their thoughts are wandering, as the saying is, 'seven ways for a Sunday,' to see them drawing down their faces to a sanctimonious length, when their hearts are as black as ebony. I tell you, Mr. Hartley, there is no denomination in the world, which numbers so many hypocrites as the Episcopal."

"Ah! you have changed your tactics. You are

finding fault with the suppliants, not with the petitions."

"Exactly; that is with the pretended suppliants. I could not but notice this morning how worldly the expression under the Sunday look was, on most of the faces.

'Tis too much proved that with devotion's visage,  
And pious action, we do sugar o'er  
The devil himself,"

said Mr. Hartley. Charley gave his sister a wink, saying as he did so:

"Quite a coincidence."

The white line gathered about Clara's mouth again, and she gave Charley a withering look. Mr. Hartley, attracted by Charley's remark, glanced at her and caught the expression. She doubtless felt his eyes, for the color came back to her lips, and the sweetest of smiles parted them.

"Charley, you surely don't prefer the Methodists to the Episcopalians, and you raised one?" asked Miss Clifford.

"I surely do."

"What! prefer their miserable meeting-houses and melodeons, to our grand organs, painted windows and sounding aisles?"

"Sounding grannies!" exclaimed Charley, contemptuously.

Nellie, struck by the ludicrousness of the remark, laughed, while Miss Clifford looked perfectly horror-stricken, and there was a very perceptible sneer on Clara's face.

"Might I ask, does your laugh indicate that you agree with Charley?" asked she, contemptuously.

"I had not intended it to indicate anything, but I do agree with Charley, to a certain extent. I love our beautiful churches, and fine music as well as any one, but I think you often find more true worship in your miserable meeting-houses, as Fannie terms them. Fred and I found it so," glancing at Fred, who had been a quiet listener.

Mr. Hartley had been watching her with a pleased expression, but a keen observer might have detected a shade of annoyance at the latter part of the remark. Was it that frequent repetition of "Fred and I?"

"It appears to me, *Fred and I* did a deal of worshipping, this morning," said Clara, with marked emphasis on the "Fred and I," and a tone of scorn in her voice.

Nellie's cheeks burned, her eyes flashed, as she replied, haughtily,

"I was not speaking of our individual worship, though I do not for an instant doubt Fred's," her tone softening as she said it; "I was speaking of the congregation."

"Ah! I beg pardon," said Clara, gently.

"Granted," was the cold rejoinder.

Mr. Hartley was watching the two, and they knew it.

"Clara likes a wee bit of style about everything, even serving God," said Charley, maliciously.

The smile lost none of its sweetness, as the voice



replied, cuttingly, and with well-assumed sorrow in it:

"And my dear brother falls very short of his pretensions to religion."

Dear brother from Clara, was too much for Charley. He replied in a stern, hard voice:

"You are, I believe, aware that I have not yet made any pretensions to religion; when I do, they shall not be false ones;" then glancing at Mr. Hartley, said:

"Clara's and my motto is *quid pro quo*."

It is strange that all this time, Clara's face could have been so sweet. It did not change even now, and Charley glancing at her just as a waiter brought him a favorite dish, sent it off with an expression of extreme disgust. Nellie seeing the action and knowing Charley's partiality, looked at him in utter astonishment; he caught the glance, and it brought him to his senses, for he gave her a look and called the waiter back.

Mr. Hartley had evidently seen the by-play, for he raised his eyebrow and gave Miss Clifford, with whom he had been talking, one of his queer looks, which perfectly fascinated her, though it was not intended for her in the least.

They seemed to have been talking of Charley, for just then she turned to him, saying:

"I shouldn't wonder if you were an Episcopalian of the strictest sect yet, Charley; perhaps a clerk; who knows? I can just hear you going through the whole service as nicely as possible."

"Never!

'In freta dum fluvii current, dum montibus umbræ  
Lustrabant convexa, polus dum sidera paseet!

was the earnest reply.

"What did he say, Mr. Hartley?" asked Miss Clifford, innocently.

\* \* \* \* \*

That evening Clara was sitting by the parlor table, reading her prayer-book. Mr. Hartley, the Judge, and Shelbourne were not far distant, talking. The others were out on the piazza. The day had been extremely warm, and as the evening advanced, Fred and Charley came in, followed by the ladies, seeking wrappings for a walk to the springs, to get a drink of cool water, before sleeping.

As they entered, Clara glanced up, and Fred asked:

"Will you go with us! We are going to the springs."

"To the springs, Sunday evening?" asked Clara, in holy horror.

"Why, do you see any harm in it?" asked Nellie.

"It savors of Sabbath-breaking."

Nellie shrugged her shoulders, while Charley glanced over at Mr. Hartley, whom he knew was listening to the conversation, though talking to the Judge.

"I didn't know that the Bible forbade one to drink on Sunday," said Nellie.

"I did not say it did; but there is water in the house without making a pleasure trip for it."

"We are going for the water, not the pleasure, though I cannot see as we commit any greater sin in walking to the springs, than sitting on the piazza.

Clara glanced at Mr. Hartley. He remained seated. She evidently was laboring under the impression that he was not going.

"Of course I shall not interfere with your plans."

"Come, Nellie, go and get your shawl; the others are waiting," said Charley, impatiently.

A few minutes more and they were ready to start. Up to this time Mr. Hartley had kept his seat, and Nellie had more than once cast furtive glances to where he sat, watching his movements. When they began leaving he arose, took his hat, and came toward her with the evident intention of offering his escort.

Nellie saw him. Her cheeks flushed, her eyes sparkled, but seized with a spirit of coquetry, she turned to Fred, saying,

"Are you ready?"

A casual observer could not have detected the slightest change in Mr. Hartley's face, as he turned, and with courtly grace gave his arm to Aunt Lucet. The old lady looked like a small peacock.

Clara's face was a study, so thunderstruck, so chop-fallen. Charley winked wickedly, and when they had all left but Phips, who had remained to keep Clara company, he turned back and said provokingly:

"You will of course enjoy your evening, having

"*Mens sibi conscia recti.*" ....

Clara looked as if she was mentally execrating both Charley and Virgil. She had intended entertaining Mr. Hartley that evening; it was something of a come down, to take poor *rich* Phips, as a substitute.

Nellie, the moment she left the house, repented her coquetry; but it was too late; it seemed as if she always repented too late.

She was very quiet all through the walk. When they reached the springs she scarce tasted the water. Fred noticed it, and said:

"Why don't you drink more, Nellie? You were the most anxious to come, and now you have scarce tasted it."

"It doesn't satisfy me. I would give a great deal for a drink from the brook at Malbrook to-night."

Mr. Hartley overheard the remark. He looked pleased, but it did not bring him to her side.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.



YOU will have to content yourself indoors, and admire the view from the window to-day," said Mr. Clifford to the party who were seated in the parlor of the Mountain House, at the White Mountains.

"What a pity! Do you really think it will rain all day?" exclaimed a dozen in a breath.

"Judge Hasbrook says it will, and he is a *Judge* you know," stroking his moustache in comfortable satisfaction at the pun, then adding:

"If you look at the west, you will need no further assurance."

There was a general movement to the window.

Alas! it was only too true; the clouds were full, and the rain fell in torrents.

"How provoking!" said Clara Hasbrook.

"I don't see as we shall have much of a view from even the windows, if the rain falls this thick all day," said one, discontentedly.

"It don't fall, it *tumbles*," chimed in another, in the same tone.

"Don't grumble at the dispensations of Providence, and do not look so utterly unhappy, ladies; the very prettiest face can be spoiled by discontent," said Charley Hasbrook, provokingly.

"People that live in glass houses, etc.," retorted Clara, insinuatingly:

"I don't quite catch the drift of your remark, sis," innocently.

"Look into the mirror and you will."

"Is that so, Miss Clifford? Do I look glum?"

"Oh, no! smiling and charming as ever," said the young lady, gaily.

"What are we going to do with ourselves all day?" drawled Mr. Phips, from the lounge where he was reclining in his dressing-gown and slippers.

"If you had asked what *you* were going to do, we should undoubtedly have replied sleep," said Charley.

"Now, Charles, that ain't fair; a fellah can't help feelin' comfortable such a day; but as for sleeping, why"——

"No need to defend yourself," interrupted Charley. "But I move that somebody proposes a way of putting in the morning."

Mr. Shelbourne proposed cards; and in a moment half a dozen tables were produced, and the cards tossed upon them.

"Where is Mr. Hartley?" asked Fred. Clara simpered sweetly, and glanced around as she always did, when he was mentioned.

"Why, yes, where is he? Does any one know?" chimed in Charley, glancing significantly at Nellie.

"He passed the door a few minutes ago," said Miss Clifford. Just then the subject of inquiry entered.

"Ah! Mr. Hartley, where have you been? Ren-

der up an account of your transactions since breakfast," said Mr. Clifford.

"That is easily done," said he, smiling. "I have been writing, and reading letters."

"Is the mail up? Are there any letters?" asked several.

"The mail is up; but as to the letters, I can only account for those directed to my care."

"I will see if there are any," said Fred, leaving the room.

Mr. Hartley went over to Nellie, who was standing with her back to the room, drumming on the window, with her fingers. She did not hear him approach; she was thinking of Malbrook, and when he placed a letter, in Mrs. Holmes's handwriting, on the sill before her, she gave an exclamation of joy, and turned all smiling and flushing to thank him. "But in turning, she caught Clara Hasbrook's sneering, envious glance. She became cold. He noticed the change, but not the cause; and the smile that her joy had produced, died. He left her to read her letters, answering Clara Hasbrook's summons to a game of whist. That glance of Clara's had stolen all Nellie's pleasure; and when she had finished her letters, she turned again to the window, sadly, this time. She declined all their invitations to the card-table, and drawing a chair to the window, sat looking out into the rain and the mist.

After a while Fred joined them.

"What is the matter, Nellie?"

"Nothing; only I'm tired of everything," dejectedly.

"Not of me, I hope?"

"No, indeed!" with a look that testified to the truth of the words.

"Were you much disappointed in not getting out to-day?"

"Not much. I think, with Mr. Phips, that it is very comfortable in the house. Our ride up the mountains, yesterday, just prepared us for to-day's rest."

Rest! She had not found it; one might see that, from the restless expression on her face. "Rest! there is very little rest in this world, Nellie," said Fred, sadly.

"There is *none*, no *true rest*! One scarce ever sees a face, that says the mind is at ease."

"Scarcely ever," unconsciously glancing at the faces of the players, and ending with his eyes fixed on Aunt Lucet's fretful, peevish face. Nellie's followed his, and she said softly:

"Dropping buckets into empty wells,  
And growing old in drawing nothing up."

"You are taking a sober view of the world."

"Perhaps I am. Some may live with a purpose, and find peace in it; but on the whole, there is far more sorrow than joy in life."

"We make a great deal of our own trouble.

"Half the ills we hoard within our heart,  
Are ills because we *hoard* them,"

she half sighed.

"That *sounds* pretty, Fred," then added lightly, "This savors of moralizing."

"It does sound sober for pleasure-seekers; but to be honest, I never did so much moralizing, as on this trip, in my life."

"Haven't you enjoyed it?"

"Yes, very much; but I keep constantly thinking, of how fleeting pleasure is. 'Vanity of vanities; all is vanity,' you know."

"Quoting the Preacher with a pack of cards in your hands; there is consistency for you!" said Charley, joining them. Fred was idly and unconsciously shuffling a pack he had brought from the table with him.

"Through playing, Charley?" asked Fred.

"Yes; Phips played so poorly and looked so sleepy, that we took mercy on him, and sent him back to his couch. But what on earth ails you and Nellie? You look very much like the weather."

"Ah! we have been discussing the vanities of life."

"Phaw! life is a glorious old concern, if one just happens to think so."

The players, wearied of their game, had thrown up their cards, and gathered around the window to look at the prospects.

"Look here, good folks!" said Charley, aloud. "Here are two people," pointing to Nellie and Fred, "who are discussing life. Fred thinks it is vanity; Nellie looks as if she thought so too. Mr. Hartley, what do you think life is?"

"What do I think life is? Life is what we make it," replied Mr. Hartley.

"An unsatisfactory definition," said Charley.

"I don't think so," said the Judge. "It is very true, life is what we make it."

"But do you think we make our lives, Judge?" asked Mr. Shelbourne, with view to an argument.

"Most certainly."

"But—

'There is a Divinity that shapes our ends,  
Rough hew them as we may.'

"Undoubtedly that is true to a certain extent; but we are not altogether passive instruments," replied the Judge.

"Well, Mr. Hartley," said Charley, interrupting the impending discussion, "if, as you say, life is what we make it, I think some people make a mighty poor out at making it."

"You contradict yourself, Charley; but a moment ago, you thought life a glorious old concern," said Nellie.

"So I do; but there ain't half the world of my opinion."

"Perhaps they have not so much cause to think so."

"Pshaw! one would think I was the most fortunate fellow in the world. Everybody can be happy, if they just happen to think so." Then he called over to Phips, who was quietly dozing on the lounge.

"Phips, what do you say life is?"

Poor Phips rubbed his eyes, and looked around in utter amazement, while Charley answered for him.

"You think it's sleepy, don't you?" and led off a laugh at his expense. The group at the window began to disperse. Judge Hasbrook, and Mr. Shelbourne carried off their bone, Destiny, to another part of the room to pick; Mr. Hartley, at Clara Hasbrook's request, teaching her to play chess; Phips, now thoroughly awake, lying on the lounge winking, or rather blinking; while the others took chairs near Nellie and Fred, and fell to discussing many things, but not life.

"Hurrah! here comes lunch; and hunger says it is about time," cried Charley.

In a moment the little group again blended into one, all gathering about the table, holding the edibles. Mr. Phips seemed head clerk of the transaction, the savor of good things having brought him to his feet. Judge Hasbrook and Mr. Shelbourne, by mutual consent, dropped their bone of contention for more substantial turkey bones. Clara would fain have continued the chess; but Mr. Hartley, perhaps because he was hungry himself, and perhaps because he feared the lady was, insisted on following the other's example.

"What may I help you to, Miss Holmes?" asked Phips, in his element.

"Here are smoking hot muffins, delicate birds, snowy bread, with ham, pink as your cheeks, between it."

"Enough: the bread and the ham, by all means, Mr. Phips," interrupting him, gaily.

"And here, Nellie, is some magnificent cake; the kind with the sugar on it. I have just tried it," said Fred.

"She will prefer this, I am sure, if I remember rightly," said Mr. Hartley, passing her a plate of gingerbread.

"Gingerbread!" exclaimed Clara Hasbrook; "you certainly do not judge her by yourself, Mr. Hartley?"

"No, I am not partial to it, as a general thing; but I ate a gingerbread once, that was certainly very fine. It surpassed anything in the cake line, I ever tasted before or since," with a look that painted Nellie's cheeks.

"Where did you eat it, Mr. Hartley? In foreign lands?" asked Clara.

"No; it was American."

"You said a gingerbread. You don't mean to say you ate it all—a whole gingerbread, Mr. Hartley!" exclaimed Miss Clifford, in astonishment.

"No; I had a little help. But I could have eaten it, every bit."

Nellie was slowly eating the gingerbread out of the very hand that had fed Mr. Hartley a piece once. She remembered it, and moreover, she saw Mr. Hartley looking at the hand, as if he remembered it too. She dropped the cake into her plate, and childishly put her hand behind her. There was a suspicious movement of Mr. Hartley's moustache.

Clara Hasbrook saw it, and also Nellie's action. She looked puzzled an instant, then said, sweetly:

"Mr. Hartley, might I trouble you for a pickle?"

"Why, Miss Hasbrook, people that eat pickles are in love," said Phips, wisely.

She smiled and blushed, but seemed too embarrassed to say anything. Charley curled his lip, and frowned, while Mr. Hartley did her bidding. Nellie shrugged her shoulder half impatiently, and reaching over the table, took two rosy apples that lay right in the centre.

"Why didn't you let me pass you those?" said Charley, at her side.

"I thought, for variety, I would wait on myself, but for your good will, I will give you the prettiest of these," handing him the rosier of the apples.

"Ah! Nellie," said the Judge, who had evidently been watching the action, "was all that effort for an apple? All women are Eves, and if even my brown-haired Nellie had been in Eden, she would have lost Paradise for an apple."

Clara Hasbrook at that moment failed to enchain Mr. Hartley. He was looking at Nellie, perhaps remembering her old defence of Eve. She did not know that he was watching her, and said, half sadly:

"Perhaps I would; one never knows what one might do until tried." Then added, playfully, holding up her apple—

"Wouldn't you, for such a rosy, pretty thing as that?"

Just then she glanced at Charley. His face was

drawn into a very wry shape. He had tasted the apple, and evidently found it tart.

"What is the matter, Charley?" asked Fred, laughing at his face.

"Nothing, brother, only I was trying to think this apple sweet, because Nellie gave it to me, and I can't do it any more than I could cheat myself into believing a pickle was a sugar-plum. Try yours, Nellie."

She had already done so, and seemed to like it.

"I think it is good, Charley. I don't like insipidly sweet fruit, any more than I do insipidly sweet people."

"Good for you, Nellie. I think I shall eat it on that suggestion," giving a sly glance at Clara, who had not heard him, for looking at Mr. Hartley, who was watching Nellie.

Nellie saw that Charley had applied her words, when she meant no application, and shook her head at him, but he was incorrigible, and as if to change the subject, took another bite of his apple, saying, wisely:

"'Hearts, like apples, are hard and sour.'"

"Not all hearts, Charley," said Fred, gently.

"It appears to me, you're making a great talk about a sour apple," said Aunt Lucet, peevishly.

"I think so too," said Clara, and for once aunt and niece agreed.



## CHAPTER XXXVII.



FEW days after, our party were at Newport. It was a glorious day, with the heavens as blue as blue could be, and with a strong, pure air blowing in over the ocean.

Nellie had been with the others on the beach all the morning, but at length, growing weary of smiling, when her heart was aching; weary of the frivolous nothings of most of her companions, and all sick at heart with jealousy, for Mr. Hartley had all the morning been helping Clara Hasbrook gather sea-weeds and shells, she at length, unobserved, stole back to the house. She entered their private parlor. There sat Judge Hasbrook in an arm-chair, his spectacles pushed up among his curly grey locks, his fat hands folded over a newspaper in his lap. Before him, conning his morning lesson, stood Top, his ebony skin shining as though it had been polished, his thick lips parted in a grin that showed off to advantage his rows of ivory.

"Now, Top," said the Judge, "spell c—a—t, cat. Say it loud, and when you are done, jump so high, so that I'll know you are through," measuring a distance of about two feet from the floor with his hand. Top did as he was bid, screaming at the top

of his voice, "C—a—t, cat," then leaping into the air, and coming down with such force, as to send him bounding up again, giggling all the while as if it was rich fun.

"What are you laughing at, you little rascal?" asked the Judge, with mock surliness, while his fat sides were shaking with suppressed laughter, at the unnecessary efforts of the odd little specimen.

"I's larfin at cat, Massa—he—e—e!" —shouted Top.

"Well, stop your laughing. Do you hear? stand up straight and spell dog the same way," said the Judge, fiercely.

"C—a—t, dog," shrieked the little nigger, bounding into the air, and coming down sprawling on the floor, where he lay rolling over and over, giggling and shouting—

"Cat—dog—he—e—e!"

Nellie's old merry laugh filled the room, and the Judge joined in it, until the tears rolled down his plump cheeks. Suddenly, he sobered himself, and asked, fiercely:

"What do you want, coming in here disturbing my morning lesson in this way?"

She went over, and sitting down on the arm of his chair, said:

"I don't want anything."

"Don't want anything? You are easily served. But is it possible, that you, a woman, don't want anything?"

"Oh, yes, I want a heap of things. I want to be a man, for instance."

"Well, that is a flat contradiction. A moment ago you didn't want anything, and now, woman-like, you want just what you can't have. But what the deuce do you want to be a man for?"

"Oh, ever so many things! His life is so much grander. So much more independent. He can do exactly as he chooses. When he gets tired of a place, and the people in it, he can run off from them, and"—

"You don't mean to insinuate you are tired of us, Miss Impudence?" interrupted the Judge.

"Certainly not of you," running her fingers through his curly grey hair, that had been her delight from a child.

"Who, then? The folks down on the beach?"

"Some of them," a little hesitatingly.

"Well, they don't intend giving you much rest, then," said he, in an undertone, as the whole party entered the parlor.

"Well, Nellie! we couldn't imagine what had become of you!" exclaimed several.

"Oh, Nellie, we have good news for you! There is going to be a hop, to-morrow night," said Miss Clifford.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.



IT was the night of the hop. The parlors were crowded with gay creatures of fashion. The music began, and the dancers joined in the fascinating, graceful mazes of the dance. Beautiful in attire, and with smiling faces; and yet a smiling face may cover an aching heart.

All that evening Nellie was with Fred, and the greater part of it, Clara Hasbrook kept Mr. Hartley by her side. It was whispered that the winter's gaieties, and summer's rustication, would result in a double wedding.

When the evening was well-nigh spent, there was a pause in the music and dancing, and Judge Hasbrook drew Nellie to the piano. At first she was going to refuse, but the recollection of how Madge had said *he* loved music, made her change her mind. She would discover whether her singing could indeed wield any power over him.

"The Italian love-song," whispered Charley, in her ear. His favorite. She would not sing it, and yet it would show him how entirely independent of him she was.

What was there in those wild, sweet tones, that so touched and softened those apparently heartless creatures of the world? Ere the song was half ended,

there were tears in many eyes. Charley at first watched her with triumph and delight, but as the song grew in sweetness and pathos, he averted his head, and set his lips firmly together, and when it burst into a wild and passionate appeal, causing every heart to quiver, he for one moment shaded his eyes with his hand, muttering to himself, "Don't be a fool, Charles Hasbrook."

As the last note died, Nellie, raising her eyes, encountered Mr. Hartley's. What was there in that glance that flooded with crimson the cheeks, that through all the song had been as driven snow? Had her singing a power over him? Clara Hasbrook, too, had seen the glance, and a white line gathered around her red lips, while a slight frown contracted her smooth forehead. Charley, who was watching his sister, smiled exultingly; but the smile was quickly changed to a scowl, when Clara, whispering something to Mr. Hartley, led him off. He muttered to himself: "These women beat the very deuce! if ever I'm such a confounded fool as to care for one, I hope I'll get my deserts."

Nellie leaned wearily for one moment against the piano, heeding not the applause that was ringing in her ears. "She could not bear it, the heat made her so faint." Aye! Nellie, is it the heat alone that makes your eyes droop thus, and the color die quickly out of your cheeks? Is it the heat causes that dull pain in your heart? Go out into the night, child, and perhaps the music of the sea, as it rolls

and beats the white beach, and the quiet stars overhead, may charm away the pain.

It is a weary, weary world, and oh! so bitter cruel:

"O! World, so few the years we live,  
Would that the life that thou dost give  
Were life indeed."

Life, life! the world is a myth; nine tenths of the human family but sheerly *exist*.

Nellie, unobserved, stole from the crowded saloon, down to the beach, enveloping herself in a white fleecy shawl. The waves, as they rolled up to her feet, sang her no joyful song. Their steady monotonous beat, sounded like sobbing and sighing. There was a step in the soft sand, and Mr. Hartley stood beside her.

"I see I was not mistaken. I saw you leave the parlor and supposed you had come here."

"Indeed! She felt highly flattered; she had supposed him too much engaged to notice her absence," in a sarcastic tone. He noticed it, but gave it no heed.

"Fred was just about seeking you, but I asked the privilege of relieving him."

"An impatient toss of the head, that said very plainly:

"It's a pity one can't be left alone a minute.

Mr. Hartley stood looking at *her*, she at the sea.

"You had better come back to the house; you will take cold here; that shawl is no protection."

"I prefer remaining where I am. I am plenty

warm enough, but you need feel under no obligations to stay, as I do not mind being alone in the least."

He half smiled at the very perceptible hint, but made no motion to take it.

"If you will not go in, you must walk. Will you have my arm?"

"No, I thank you;" another smile at the very polite way of being impolite.

They walked on in silence for a minute, then Mr. Hartley said:

"I shall write to Amy, to-night. Have you any message?"

"My love."

"Nothing more? Shan't I tell her what report says of you?"

"When I have anything to impart, I will do it myself, thank you," sarcastically.

He looked offended.

"I beg your pardon. I was officious. I should not have forgotten how short a time it is since you refused even my friendship. Pardon the presumption."

He had cut *her* now, and she was silent, while he continued, lightly:

"I suppose that is why you have never told me what you have not kept from others. But even an acquaintance may offer his good wishes, and I think I, at least, have that honor."

"Undoubtedly!" with forced composure.

"Fred is a fine man, calculated to make any woman happy." An acute observer might have detected

something forced even in that quietly spoken sentence; it was perfectly evident in the reply.

"Undoubtedly!" a very odd smile under the fine moustache, at the stereotyped answers.

"We will miss you at Malbrook."

"Thank you: it is pleasant to be missed. But I'm afraid I shall have to forego that pleasure. You know Aunt Amy says she will never leave Malbrook, and it was my uncle's command, that we should never be separated. I reckon you will have to let me bring my husband to Malbrook, Mr. Hartley;" there was a touch of the old merriment mingled with the sarcasm of her tone.


Mr. Hartley was silent; he did not understand her. After waiting a moment, she continued:

"I have been presumptuous now. I beg *your* pardon!" with strong emphasis on the *presumptuous*.

"Not at all," replied he, recovering himself. "We shall be very happy, not only to have *you*, but *your husband* also, at Malbrook." The tone belied the words, there was a touch of irony in it.

"You are very kind, but I shall not trouble you, as I have no intention of possessing myself of such an article at present. If you have heard, and given credence to that foolish story, of my engagement to Fred, allow me to correct the mistake. There is *not*, nor ever will be such a relation existing between us. Fred is my friend, my *best* friend, but nothing more. I find my shawl is rather thin; good-night," and with a slight inclination of the head, she was gone, and Mr. Hartley stood alone by the sea.

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

LD Barbara was sitting at one corner of her kitchen hearth, as usual, warming her feet. Cris sat dangling his legs, and apparently counting his fingers, at the other side. One would never have thought, judging from their position, that a warm September sun was shining brightly out of doors, and would have expected to see snow, or at least frost, instead of the flowers that were blooming in gay profusion all about the lodge.

They had sat thus, a long time in unbroken silence, when the door burst open, and Clemancy rushed in, with anger and dismay depicted in every feature of her face.

"Well!" exclaimed she, excitedly, "the whole tribe of 'em is coming!"

"The whole tribe of what?" drawled Barbara, while Cris opened his eyes and mouth, wide in wonder, and looked uneasily at the open door.

"What are you gaping at, you big lubber?" attacking Cris, as she always did when angry, then answering Barbara's question:

"The whole tribe of what? Why, folks, of course! What did you suppose? And that old

hippercrit of a Clara Hasbrook, that's equal to six Old Nicks in a bunch!"

"Re-mark-a-ble!" ejaculated Cris, while Barbara stuck her feet so near the fire, that her shoes smoked.

"I'm beat if it ain't *too mean*," continued Clemancy, too excited to pay any attention to her listeners—"I thought, when we heard Miss Nellie was coming home, that she'd git to acting natural, like, and Mr. Hartley would act like hisself, and we'd all be comfortable, like, again. But here it's all blown higher than a kite on a windy day, and all through that plotting, screwing old hippercrit! She's at the bottom of it all, I know, without any telling. I know how she came it around Mr. Hartley, with her oily tongue, until he asked the whole kelter pelter of 'em here. I wonder what the Lord makes such critters as her for?"

"Oh, Clemancy, it's all ordered!" whined Barbara.

"Go away with your ordered. It is no more ordered than I be!" contemptuously, then continued, excitedly:

"I pray she'll never git to Malbrook. I wish she'd fall down and break all her teeth out, or else the Lord would give her a new heart, and make a decent creetur of her, which I think it would be pretty hard to do. I don't mind your right up and down, cross, disagreeable scolds, but when it comes to these sneaking, muddy things, bah! she'd have sickened Saint Peter! and I'm afraid if that white

livered creetur once gits here, it will be hard shoving to git her off."

"Why, you don't think she'll stay always?" drawled Barbara.

"I don't think anything about it, only I know if she comes, it'll be like the serpent gitting into Paradise."

"Re-mark-a-ble!" again exclaimed Cris, evidently at what he considered Clemancy's great learning.

"Well, *you* are remarkable," said Clemancy, half angrily, half kindly. "But if you don't mind it, and ain't afraid of freezing," looking contemptuously at the fire, "I'll git you to come up to the house. We're all busy preparing up there, and want your help." Cris arose with alacrity to do her bidding; for although Clemancy did scold occasionally, and he always got his dose of her ill-temper, it was plain to be seen the maid had a great charm for him.

"Be sure and shut the door after you, it makes such a draft," called Barbara after them, as they were leaving the lodge.

"It beats all how hard it is to keep your mother hot," said Clemancy, when she and Cris were fairly on the road.

\* \* \* \* \*

There was a discussion in the kitchen. One had only to glance in at the open door to see that. Doris was standing with her arms akimbo, and flashing defiance at Clemancy, who seemed very much excited about something. Cris sat with his legs entangled in the rung of the chair, his lower jaw

dropped, and an expression of the greatest astonishment in his face, while Betty stood looking on, ready to pitch in a word whenever an opportunity should offer.

"I tell you, you don't know any more about it than a baby!" exclaimed Clemancy, stamping her foot.

"I don't, don't I? I'd just like to know if my Cousin Nancy ain't lived at Judge Hasbrook's these six years, and if she ain't a better judger than you. Bedad! I ain't my own mother's child!"

"Well, then, you ain't! and if your Cousin Nancy had lived there six years afore she was born, up to the present time, I wouldn't believe her. How should she know? she lives in the kitchen!" contemptuously.

"You'd better be taking care, Miss Clem. I live in the kitchen, too, and I think myself after being as good as you," said the cook, angrily.

"Well, don't get so fierce, Doris; I hadn't any more notion of throwing out hints at you, than nothing in the world. It only made me mad like, to hear you gossiping about Miss Nellie, and saying she was going to be after marrying Mr. Fred Hasbrook, when she hain't any more thought of it than you, and I give you my swansy on it, that Miss Clara Hasbrook gave out that notion."

"I don't see what business you had, to fly off in the way you did. I'm sure Mr. Fred is a very nice young man, though I do know some one better suited to Miss Nellie."

"And who may that be?" snapped Clemancy.

"That is not for me to say," replied the cook, coolly.

"Not for you to say? I guess it's not," said Clemancy, growing hotter still, as the cook cooled off.

"I know one thing," said Betty.

"You do, hey? Well, spit it out!" said Clemancy, looking as if she expected another contest.

"It won't be long afore Mr. Hartley brings a wife to Malbrook."

"Who may she be going to be?" snapped Clemancy.

"Why, she'll most likely be Mrs. Hartley," replied Betty, smartly.

Clemancy looked as if she would like to devour her, while Cris, struck with the wittiness of the speech, ejaculated:

"Re-mark-a-ble!"

"Who may she be now?" shouted Clemancy frowning at Cris.

"Well, she may be Miss Clara Hasbrook, if you please."

"Well, I don't please! and that is another big lie, and I shan't be called to answer for telling you of it, either."

"Well, I hope you won't, Clem, for it strikes me some folks will have a mighty long account to settle."

"Well, save your pity for yourself, Betty. See that you save your own soul, and the Lord won't ask

any more of you. But if you please, I'd just like to know what authority you have for that speech of yourn?"

"I have good authority, but I'm not going to be after committing myself. But if you'd like to see anything, just go around the corner of the house, and look who you see on the veranda."

Clemancy started off, and in a few minutes returned with a very triumphant face.

"Umph! umph! I'd like to know what I saw? I didn't see nothing. The veranda is as empty as some folks' heads, not having a soul on it, but old Miss Lucet. Umph! I'd just like to know what you'll say to that?"

"It wasn't so empty a few minutes ago," knowingly.

"How do you know it wasn't? been playing spy?"

"Not any more than you did, a moment ago," hotly.

"Well, and what did you see so wonderful?" questioned Clemancy.

"That!" said Betty, pointing significantly out of the window. All eyes were turned in the assigned direction. Clara Hasbrook and Mr. Hartley were passing.

"Umph! I give my swansy on it, she asked him!" said Clemancy, not in the least discomfited.

"You'd better take care. You'll be after repenting for the like of all this, when she gits to be mistress," said Doris, warningly.

"Sakes! do you think you'll be finding me here, when the like of her gits to be mistress? No; I'll take up my duds and put," said Clemancy, contemptuously.

Cris gaped at her, dropping his lower jaw in woe-ful astonishment, as though in imagination he already saw Clemancy and her duds departing.

"And where will you be pleased to take yourself?" asked Betty.

"The Lord only knows where," dejectedly.

Cris looked more than woe-be gone, and grew so excited at the very idea of Clemancy being cast out on the world, that he tangled his legs more effectually in the rung of his chair, and had confused ideas of packing up his duds and going with her.

\* \* \* \*

It was as Clemancy had conjectured. Clara Hasbrook had asked Mr. Hartley to walk, on the plea of showing her the grounds. She had grown desperately in love with Malbrook, lavishing praises on everything connected with it. This was the second day of the party's visit. Clara Hasbrook meant to do wonderful things before that visit was completed.

Mistress and maid were not unlike in their thoughts that afternoon. If Clemancy was forming plans for "packing up her duds, and putting," Nellie was doing very nearly the same thing. She, from a window, had seen Mr. Hartley and Clara sauntering, and her constant thought was, "Where should she go? She would not stay at Malbrook then; she would go out into the world homeless, first; she could

not go to her guardian's, or the world would talk, and perhaps again say that she was jealous of Clara Hasbrook. She wished she had never been born."

Toward evening, the party missed her. She had gone off somewhere by herself. Where was she? A few golden sunbeams that lingered, reluctant to bid the fair earth good-night, whispered to each other, that there was a maiden in the burying-ground, kneeling by the white stone that bore the simple inscription, "Madge."

She seemed to seek sympathy from that hard, white stone. Once she stooped and touched the marble with her ruby lips, as if she loved the lifeless thing. Long she lingered there, until at length the tardy sunbeams were forced to creep down behind the mountains, and the silver moon stepped proudly across the blue sky. Then the wicket gate of the burying-ground swung noiselessly to, and Nellie turned wearily homeward. Her face was pale, her brow contracted as with pain. She had suffered keenly since her return to Malbrook. A little after, she entered the drawing-room. It was brilliantly lighted. At first she thought it unoccupied, but an instant afterward heard voices, and saw Mr. Hartley and Clara Hasbrook standing in one of the casements. She cast one glance at them, then left the room. She little dreamed how much there was in that glance. Mr. Hartley caught it, and Clara Hasbrook saw him start—it was well for her that his face was in the shade. A few minutes after, he proposed joining the party on the veranda. They had been



there but a moment, when Nellie, too, came out, and was greeted on all sides with the question:

"Where on earth have you hidden yourself all this afternoon?"

Coming from a bright light, she had first to become accustomed to the darkness before she could distinguish any one, and without being aware of it, she was standing right beside Mr. Hartley.

"I am like one blind. I wonder if the sense of touch would tell me who this is?" said she, lightly, just touching, as she spoke, Mr. Hartley's arm.

Had the sense of feeling told her? or had her eyes become accustomed to the darkness?

She started. But a moment before, she left him in the drawing-room. In starting, she dropped a rosebud she had been twirling in her fingers. Mr. Hartley picked it up, and instead of returning it, stuck it in his button-hole, saying, lightly:

"Well, who am I?"

Surprise seemed to have deprived her of the power of speech. She made no reply; the next moment Fred was at her other side, asking:

"Where have you been all this afternoon?"

"Out," was the rather short answer.

"Definite" said Mr. Hartley, looking amused.

Nellie paid no attention to him.

"So was I out, but I saw nothing of you. In what direction were you?" asked Fred.

"Toward the setting sun."

"More definite still," said Fred, laughing. Mr.

Hartley thought it decidedly more definite; he was better acquainted with Malbrook than Fred.

Just then Charley joined them, saying that the Northern Lights were visible from the other end of the veranda. Mr. Hartley asked Nellie if she would like to see them. She said "No, I thank you," in a polite, cold way. He looked disappointed. Then Clara Hasbrook tripped up beside him, saying.

"Oh, Mr. Hartley, you should just see the Northern Lights! they are perfectly lovely! It really seems as if everything had conspired to make Malbrook beautiful."

He paid no attention to the latter part of the remark. She had wearied him with her praises of Malbrook that afternoon—and simply said—

"I have just seen the lights, Miss Clara."

"They will bear a second view. Just do come and look at them again, to please me."

Of course he couldn't help himself, so he went, with all his accustomed grace. Charley shrugged his shoulders, and asked Fred—"If this was leap year."

"Fred, I have changed my mind about seeing the Northern Lights. Will you go with me?" said Nellie.

"Certainly; but what will Mr. Hartley think?"

"That is immaterial," coldly.

"Nellie, let me take you; you always go everywhere with Fred, and never with me," said Charley, pretending to be offended, but in reality having an object in asking her.

She took his offered arm, saying lightly:

"You shall not have cause to complain of partiality again to-night."

He led her intentionally right beside Mr. Hartley and his sister.

"You see Nellie has changed her mind, Mr. Hartley."

"Yes," said he, rather coldly.

Clara looked as if she did not understand what Charley meant. He intended she should; it was for that purpose he had come there.

"Nellie wouldn't come with Mr. Hartley when he asked her, and just a moment after asked me to bring her. You don't admire her taste much, do you, sis?"

Clara looked fairly green with jealousy.

Mr. Hartley had asked Nellie, and she had been obliged not only to ask, but to coax him to come with her. She was too angry to answer, and Charley, having accomplished his design, led Nellie off, to where he said there was a better view.

\* \* \* \* \*

The next morning Nellie went to Barbara's. She did not stay long, and when she came out from the Lodge, looked anything but pleasant.

The old woman had been telling her a deal of gossip about Clara and Mr. Hartley. "How Doris had told her, that her Cousin Nancy had told her, that Miss Clara's dressing maid had told her, that Miss Clara was going to git married to him for sure, and how, through pretty near the same source, she

had heard that she—Nellie—was going to git married to Mr. Fred.

Nellie had denied the gossip, as far as herself and Fred were concerned, but the old woman had obstinately refused to believe her, saying: "The story had come straight, and from good quarters," and Nellie in a fit of impatience had left her.

Was it any wonder she looked cross?

Just as she was going up the steps of the veranda, Mr. Hartley overtook her.

"Where have you been all this lovely morning?"

"To Barbara's."

He glanced at her clouded face, and raising his eyebrows, asked significantly:

"Did her cat scratch you?"

She made no answer, but her eyes flashed at the recollection. She went immediately to the sitting-room to deliver a message of Barbara's to her aunt. Mr. Hartley followed her. They found Mrs. Holmes lying on the lounge, suffering from one of her severe headaches, and May on a low stool near her, cutting paper dolls.

"What has made your head ache so badly, Aunt Amy?" asked Nellie, deferring Barbara's message until another time.

"Nothing, dear," very quietly. That there was something, was perfectly evident from the troubled lines on her gentle face. She had partaken of the general belief that Mr. Hartley meant to marry Clara Hasbrook, and it was grieving her to death. Mr.

Hartley had taken a seat and Nellie, seeing he had no intention of leaving the room, left it herself, encountering Clara Hasbrook entering as she did so. Clara tripped noiselessly up to Mrs. Holmes's side, saying, with sweet anxiety:

"Is there nothing I can do for you, dear Mrs. Holmes?"

"Nothing," softly.

"May I not bathe your head with camphor? I should love to so much."

Mrs. Holmes made no objection; she had a mortal horror of camphor; but when her guest said she would love to bathe her head with it, she could not be so impolite as to refuse, so she bore the infliction patiently, for etiquette's sake.

Clara knelt down beside her in a very pretty position, smiling around to Mr. Hartley as she did so, and stroked the gentle lady's brow daintily with her fingers.

May tossed aside her paper dolls; there was a bit of a curl on her red lips, and a defiant look in her black eyes.

"I hate that smell," said she, contemptuously.

"Do you, Puss?" said Clara, sweetly.

"I don't want *you* to call me Puss," said she, with all the frankness of childhood.

"Why not?" asked Clara, smiling at her.

"'Cause! I don't want anybody to call me that but mamma, and Uncle Robert, and Nellie."

"Won't you let me call you that?—just *me*?" pleaded Clara, sweetly.

"No," said May, coolly, then turned on her heel and left the room, stopping at the door to beckon to Mr. Hartley. He had looked very much amused during the conversation, and answered her call immediately. She took his hand, and skipping along by his side as he walked to the library, said:

"Isn't it true, what I told you in the buggy that day, Uncle Robert?"

"What, Puss?" raising his eyebrows at the intelligible question.

"Why, that she's *so sweet*, that she's *sour*," motioning with her head to where they had left Clara Hasbrook.

He laughed. Then they entered the library. Nellie was there reading. She glanced up as they entered, and gave her shoulder an impatient little shrug, that said very plainly,

"I wish I might be left alone, and not followed every place I go," then went back to her book.

Mr. Hartley, paying no attention to the rebuff, took a seat, and drawing May to his side, whispered something in her ear. An instant after the little girl skipped over to Nellie, and said,


"I think Miss Clara is so sweet that she's sour. What do you think, Nellie?"

Nellie colored very deeply, she knew Mr. Hartley was watching her.

"Hey! What do you think, Nellie?" persisted May, receiving no answer.

Just then Clara, anxious as to Mr. Hartley's whereabouts, entered the room, and Nellie, with a feeling of inexpressible relief, went into the drawing-room to join her guests.

## CHAPTER XL.

 HERE never was such a day! Such a glorious October day! with the four winds of heaven all out on a frolic. The woods painted with Autumn's glowing brush, and the fleecy clouds capering most gleefully over the deep azure sky. It was a perfect day. The birds almost burst their little throats singing of its beauty; and even the squirrels, as if to show their appreciation of its loveliness, ran up and down the great trunks of the trees that stood about Malbrook's fair old mansion, until one would have thought they would have been tired to death.

A number of horses stood ready saddled under those fine old trees, waiting for their riders, who were coming down the stone steps that led from the veranda. They were a very merry group, but who could help but be merry on such a day?

Among the horses, all of which were noble animals, was one on whom you needed to cast but a glance to guess his name. A beautiful creature with arched neck, who pawed the earth, and shook his flowing mane most impatiently. The very personification of Restlessness. And his mistress, with long black habit, and jaunty hat, whose sable plume

rested on her glossy brown hair—who, looking at her as she bounded unaided into the saddle, keeping tight rein on the impatient animal, her eyes flashing at the other's tardiness—who could look and not say, that horse and rider were well mated?

Impatient of delay, she gave the little word that sent Restless flying down the carriage road. As they bounded through the open gate, Cris, with eyes and mouth wide stretched in admiration, ejaculated:

"Re-mark-able!"

Up and down the road they flew, until joined by the others. First came Fred and Charley racing at full speed, each determined to join her first, and close behind them Clifford and Shelbourne, with Fanny Clifford, and then Phips and a dozen others; and bringing up the rear, Mr. Hartley, leading Clara Hasbrook's horse by the bridle—that young lady having requested him to do so, as she said "it was so long since she had been on horseback, that she felt a little timid."

If she thought timidity would make her charming, for once she was mistaken; for all gentlemen admire fearlessness in a lady. If it was simply a plan to keep him by her side, of course she was successful; for what gentleman could refuse a lady's request to lead her horse?

The party rode on, and the miles slipped under the horses' feet, and ever Nellie, Fred and Charley had the lead, and ever Mr. Hartley and Clara were in the rear—Clara not yet having lost her timidity, nor giv-

en her companion leave to relinquish his hold on the rein.

But to-day Clara had overshot her mark. She was on the sentimental—talking languishingly of life, and beautiful Nature—*mirabile dictu*, Art passing judgment on Nature. Mr. Hartley was a puzzle to her. Ever since she had been at Malbrook she had done nothing but extol the place. Nothing but wonder if it wouldn't be perfect bliss to live there. In fact, she had forgotten womanly modesty; had not scrupled at hinting; had done everything but openly propose, and Mr. Hartley was deaf and blind to it all. She could not account for it. She felt quite safe as far as Nellie was concerned. She had played her cards well, keeping them from Malbrook all summer by that gay trip, and now should she not succeed during this visit, Nellie should return to the city with her, and "Hope on, hope ever" was her motto.

One's will can accomplish a great deal, but not everything; for Clara Hasbrook had intended to keep Mr. Hartley at her side all through that ride, but just as they left the third mile-post in the rear, Mr. Phips fell back to join their company, and Mr. Hartley very gracefully put the annoying rein into his hand, saying—

"I am obliged to relinquish my charge, as I have a promise of racing to fulfill with Charley."

He lifted his hat, and in a moment was far ahead. Clara looked dumbfounded.

When Mr. Hartley caught up with the leading

riders, Charley did not see him, so taken up was he with Nellie, on whose cheek the frolicking wind had painted damask roses, and brought bright sparkles into her eyes, and capered in and out the waves of her golden brown hair, loosening it here, and twirling it into curls there; was there ever such a frolicking, rollicking wind? Mr. Hartley seemed to have forgotten Charley and the race, looking with admiration at Nellie's sparkling face, while she kept her eyes fastened on Charley, who, wondering at the deepening roses on her cheeks, turned to see the cause.

"Ah, Mr. Hartley, I was beginning to think you had forgotten your promise."

"No, but your sister was afraid to ride alone."

Not even Charley's quick ear detected the scorn in Mr. Hartley's tone; how should Nellie?

"I propose an amendment to the agreement, Charley, that all should enlist in the race, which shall extend from the coming mile-post to the next."

"Agreed!" said Charley, starting off to make known the plan.

In a moment all were riding at full speed, and it was not long before the mile-post was reached, and when it was passed, Mr. Hartley was at Nellie's side. Nellie paid no more attention to him than if he had not been there. At length the mountains rose high on one side of the road, and the woods lay dense on the other; then he said in a low tone,

"I challenge you to a single combat on the mountain road."

She looked at him then for the first time. His face was grave, and wore a look of determination that forbade her to refuse his request. In a moment they had redoubled their speed, while those behind looked after and said:

"There is another race."

Very soon they were out of sight, and then they left the highway, taking a by-path that wound through the woods into the heart of the mountains. It was the very road over which Nellie had raced long ago, with her unknown victor. Was she the same girl that had flown over that wild rocky way so happily, with a heart all free from trouble? Could it be? Was that aching, throbbing heart that she strove so hard to hide beneath a gay exterior, the same? Ah! time had changed her!

They rode slowly when first the mountains enclosed them, as if gathering strength for the coming contest. Mr. Hartley had little to say; Nellie tried to talk gaily as she did when others were present, but soon she too grew silent. As she felt Mr. Hartley's eyes constantly on her face, the color came and went most painfully in her cheeks. And fearful lest he should read her thoughts, she gave the word to her horse, and led the race herself. Restless, as if remembering his defeat on this same mountain road, and anxious to retrieve his fallen reputation, fairly flew, while his beautiful rider, mindful too of that last race, looked proudly on her horse, urging him to the greater speed. Every now and then she

would cast an anxious glance at her companion, who kept ever at her side.

Onward and onward they speed, their horses' feet scarce deigning to touch the ground, and each mile, as it slips by, tells that no advantage is gained; that the two are even. Will neither win? Shall the front never be gained? Speed on, Nellie, give free rein to your horse. What though the miles you have passed over have wearied you? What though the color has fled your cheeks, leaving them as white as snow-drifts? What though the pain in your heart is eating your life out? On, on, Nellie! Will you lose the race?

Lose the race? Aye, 'tis lost already, and the victor knew as well as she that she could never gain the lost distance; for he paused where the long mountain road again blended with the woods, and waited her approach. She rode up very slowly, striving to hide her chagrin and weariness, while he said, with a triumphant smile,

"The 'third time is the charm,' Nellie, but I will be liberal, and give you another chance to retrieve your honor. Do you accept it?" then, without giving her time to reply:

"The choice of the field and the time you know is due the victor.

She bowed assent.

"Well, then, the time shall be now, the place"—

But she interrupted him, saying, wonderingly:

"Now, Mr. Hartley? O! I should only lose again. Restless is tired."

"And I doubt not his mistress is too if she was not too proud to acknowledge it," said he, with that slight raising of his eyebrows.

She was silent, turning her eyes from him and patting Restless on the neck.

"If she will not acknowledge it I will have to do so for her. We will let our horses stand here and if you will sit on that fallen log," pointing to one close by, "I will tell you the field of the race while you rest." He had dismounted, and stood by the side of Restless. She said "she could rest where she was, and would not dismount;" but Mr. Hartley took her hand, saying—

"Restless couldn't, even if she could;" so she sprang down and followed him to the stump, sitting down on it with increasing weariness, at the very thought of rest. He stood quietly watching her until she looked up wonderingly, and said—

"You haven't told me!"

"Nellie, the race may be long; it may weary you, and when you learn the field you may wish to recant. Take back your promise, Nellie, until I have told you, there shall be no compulsion."

"I do not wish to retract; it will matter little where the field is," replied she, thinking he doubted her courage.

"Take it back, Nellie; your consent must be given voluntarily."

"As you please," haughtily.

"Nellie," there was something in the tone and the

eyes fixed earnestly upon her, that made her look away hastily.

"The race is the race of life. Will you run it by my side?"

She cast a startled, almost frightened glance at him, and was silent.

"Tell me quickly, Nellie! I cannot bear this suspense. Have I loved so long in vain?" In a low eager tone. Her face was deathly pale; she grew faint as it dawned upon her. "He had loved her all that dreadful year."

"Nellie, have I been deceived? Do you, have you ever loved another?" and he sat down beside her, and bent his head in his hands like one from whom hope has fled. He had mistaken her silence. It roused her, that dejected position. She laid her hand timidly on his knee, and said eagerly, softly—

"I don't, I never did." He looked into her face searchingly a moment, then the expression changed, and raising his eye-brows he said lightly,

"Why have you been such a naughty girl all this time?"

She averted her face.

"Come, I am going to know; what made you refuse to let me be even your friend?"

In justice to herself she told it all, how Don Carara had deceived her. He looked stern and angry for a moment then asked, in his quizzical way.

"But why didn't you change your course of action, when you found you had been deceived?"

She colored deeply. He stooped, and dropping

his first kiss on the pretty mouth, that May had once said was just made for that purpose, said lightly:

"We will tell Miss Clara Hasbrook, when we go home, that she has outrivalled herself."

That word home, had a wonderful effect on Nellie just then. She sprang up, saying—"She was rested," and something about "What would company think?" But Mr. Hartley said he wasn't rested, and told her to sit down again. She did not do it, however, but stood before him and asked curiously:

"What did you mean by the third time? I never raced with you but once before."

"Quite sure, Nellie?" said he, as he arose, and loosening the strings of her riding-hat with one hand, with the other drew from his pocket a little velvet jockey, with long uncurled plume, and placing it on her head said lightly—

"Prettier than ever, as I live!"

Nellie's face was the very picture of wonder, as she exclaimed:

"My lost hat!"

"Yes, your lost hat; and try your best; this is the third time, and I am your old hero."

\* \* \* \* \*

That evening when the cake and wine were passed, Mr. Hartley crossed the room to a little group among whom were Mrs. Holmes, Clara Hasbrook and Nellie. He stood beside Nellie, and said lightly, and quite loud enough for Clara Hasbrook to hear:



"We drank a health with water once; I should like to renew it with wine," and touching her glass with his, said, with a proud bright light in his eye.

"Mrs. Nellie Hartley!" Then added in an undertone, that none but she could hear:

"A pretty name."

Clara Hasbrook turned fairly green, while Mrs. Holmes's gentle face was wreathed with smiles. A moment after, Clemancy bounded into the kitchen, where the servants were assembled, even old Barbara being present, and pointing from one to the other, exclaimed, excitedly:

"Hurrah! I wonder who's right now! I wonder who's so smart and knows so mighty much! I wonder who'll not be packing up and putting off now! I wonder if there ain't going to be a grand fuss here next month for all your croaking, when Mr. Robert Hartley, lord of Malbrook, joins hands with Miss Nellie Holmes, in the solemn bonds of getting married! Hurrah for the salt of the earth! I'm beat if I ever say a bad word again, Judy scratch, if I ain't." And the girl swung a dish towel in the air, and stopped for want of breath. It was a strange picture her announcement produced. Old Barbara hitched her chair so close to the fire, that she burnt a hole in her dress. Cris, forgetting that his legs were entangled in the rung of his chair, attempted to spring up, and in doing so fell sprawling, exclaiming as he did so—

"Re-mark-able!" While Doris, with arms akimbo, shouted, "Bedad!" and Betty chimed in,

"Won't Miss Clara Hasbrook be cut up, though!"

She was considerably "cut up," so the world thought, when, a few weeks after, she made them open their eyes, by leading to the hymeneal altar, Phips and his money.

THE END.



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