

MABEL:

OR,

HEART HISTORIES.

A Tale of Truth.

BY ROSELLA RICE.

SECOND EDITION.

"Who stirred such thoughts? you ask;
Whose fault was it that she should
have such thoughts?
None's fault, none's fault:
The light comes, and we see!"

MRS. BROWNING

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TO MY PARENTS:
THE DEAR FATHER, WHOSE PURE LIFE IS LIKE A BEACON TO MY
DARKENED PATHWAY;
WHOSE LOVE AND SYMPATHY HAVE BLEST AND CHEERED ME;
AND TO MY MOTHER AND STEP-MOTHER,
WHO REST FROM THEIR LABORS, ANGEL-CROWNED,
IN HEAVEN,
IS THIS VOLUME AFFECTIONATELY AND REVERENTLY INSCRIBED,
BY THEIR GRATEFUL DAUGHTER,

THE AUTHORESS.
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MABEL; OR HEART HISTORIES.

CHAPTER I.

I ever read pride was unlovely.

WILLIS.

"You little wretch! keep your hands off my dress!" and the haughty speaker, Mabel Hammond, flung from among the lustrous folds of her silk dress, the little thin hands of a three-year old baby, whose love of the beautiful was even then, a tiny germ, beginning to manifest itself.

Any generous heart would have been touched at the child-grief that outspoke, in the quivering lip, and in the hazel eyes which filled with tears, as the babe hurried away to her mother and burying her face in her bosom wept aloud. "She don't love me," lisped the child. "Mother loves you, darling;" whispered Mrs. Lisle, as she drew the attention of baby Alice to a bird's nest in the ivy vines that shaded the low windows of the old church. This touched a harmonizing chord in the sensitive heart of the child, and she leaned back on her mother's bosom watching the gray swallow peering over the rim of her nest, until she forgot her recent sorrow in sleep.

Glen Green is one of the loveliest retreats in New England. From the hills above the Glen, the eye beholds a scene that becomes instantly daguerreotyped—and all through the beholder's life the beautiful picture accompanies him. Away to the east lies the Atlantic, but the roar and tumult of its waves reach not the quiet of Glen Green; on the north and west lie the Green Mountains, and here at the base of the rugged hills, that shut in the neighborhood of the Glen, winds and sparkles the Connecticut river.

One of the old, old churches, built in the long ago, is the one with which our story opens.

The roof is steep and gray, and plushy with moss, and the old stone steps are quite buried in grass and the viny myrtle that creeps with its glossy leaves all about the yard. Tall pines, the crowning beauty of Glen Green, lift their plumed heads high above the church, and nod from the surrounding hills, and sway in the winds like broken-hearted mourners, whose griefs are more than they can bear.

How solemn and stately and appropriate are those old pines in that beautiful place!

Down the Glen, below where the rocks rise abruptly and break the tinkling ripple of the brook into a leaping waterfall, is the old graveyard, gleaming white with slabs of marble and fine monuments, and lovely symbols of the beloved and departed. A little brown school house, in the grove below farmer Leed's handsome residence, and the rumbling old mill, add a finishing touch of beauty to the picturesque scenery of the Glen.

When service was over, and the throng of worshipers were wending their way homewards, Cicely Marshall, a gentle

hearted girl, came up to Mrs. Lisle and asked to carry the sleeping Alice as far as to where the lane turned down to her mother's.

Mrs. Lisle thanked her, and laid the child in her arms, saying, "Dear one! she sobbed herself to sleep."

"I did feel so grieved for the babe," said Cicely, "when Mabel whispered so angrily to her, and pushed her away from her."

"Poor, proud Mabel!" sorrowfully replied Mrs. Lisle as they stepped over the stone wall that enclosed the graveyard, in taking a nearer way homeward.

As they passed out they stopped a moment at the grave of a poor girl, whose whole life had been dark and unhappy—one of those whom superstition bans as ill-starred. Rest had come to her at last—no more folding of the wan hands in prayer—no more anguish of soul over the slanderer's lies—peace, sweet peace, had come at last.

Cicely leaned over the head-stone a moment—a mistiness dimmed her eyes, and as she turned away she softly dropped over the grave a handful of wild flowers.

Just then a light laugh, that would have sounded musical or sweet in a ball room or at a party, broke upon their ears, falling harshly and unkindly there, in that silent city of the dead; and Mabel Hammond glided softly, and with the haughtiness of one in power, towards them, escorted by her lover, Charles Stanton.

Cicely turned to close the gate as they left the yard, and saw Mabel set her little foot crushingly upon the flowers on the grave of the hapless one.

"Flowers on this grave!" said the beauty, as she ground

them under her heel, and looked up into Charlie's handsome face with a smile that was as strong as a chain, and was one of the fetters that held him in captivity. She knew her power over him, and well did she wield it. So wondrous a spell is that of mere beauty of face!

Mabel was the only daughter, and from babyhood had been petted and permitted to have her own way, and now even her father stood in awe of her and was glad when he could win from her a smiling "thank you," or "you are very kind, father." He courted her favor like a fawning sycophant. Her mother, with all a mother's love and weakness and partiality, doated on the queenly Mabel and rejoiced only when she was happy. Blind to all her daughter's faults, she blessed God for the gift of so beautiful a child in her young girlhood, and now her cup of joy was full to the brim since Mabel was the betrothed of Charles Stanton.

CHAPTER II.

For love at first is but a dreamy thing,
That slyly nestles in the human heart.

MRS. WELBY.

It was a quiet little brown cottage nestling among the hills that lay in sight of the village of Wendall, in Massachusetts. Its sole inmates, except two hired men and a servant girl, were Mr. Howland and his daughter Jennie, a girl of fourteen summers.

Convenience and comfort were there, judging from the home and its surroundings. Those little outhouses that are so necessary about a farmer's residence, and in a tasteful yard look like sores or scars on the face of beauty, were there, but the drapery that a poetical taste had flung about them rendered them valuable auxiliaries in finishing the picture of a country home.

The spring house was gray and low, in harmony with the fence that ran near it, and a thrifty hop vine was trailing its long green lengths all over the sides and roof, and hung down until it lay in a mass on the fence, and then it crept, like a thing of life, along the topmost rails. The brick oven stood away back among the poplars, and the bee house was buried

in flowering shrubs and sweet scented posies. Grape vines and honeysuckles and jasmines thickly covered the lattice of the porch, and ran over Jennie's bed-room window. And his, the hand that so loved to train the beautiful in nature, had wooed the vine, bearing the crimson passion flower, in at the parlor windows, and around the walls, until they draped the large mirror and crept like a dainty border around the small gilt frames that held the pictures of his wife, and of one, the object of a former unfortunate attachment.

Ah, he was a poet! But better for himself he had never penned his inspiration—never given to the world a transcript of those glowing thoughts and dreams that made very beautiful a part of his inner life. And yet, he was cold and hard and selfish.

It was a sunset evening in June, and Mr. Howland was walking in the neat little room he called his library and study, his hands were crossed behind him, his eyes were bent down; in an attitude of deep study he paced quickly from one end of the room, which was covered with shelves of books, to the other, that was occupied by a desk, guitar, the latest periodicals and an easy chair.

It was commencement at the female seminary in Wendall, and Jennie's little step was falling lightly here and there, in her chamber up stairs, preparing to attend as a spectator, not a participant, for her education was almost wholly under the care of her father. He was her teacher and daily companion, so fearful was he that the purity of his white lily should become sullied by companionship with minds less elevated than his own.

"Selfish was he, weak and selfish," in thus daring to hold

in check the outreaching tendrils of such a vine-like nature as his daughter's. Already did she begin to feel the unwelcome restraint that held her within such narrow limits.

"Can I assist you, Jane?" called her father from the foot of the stairs, as the clock struck six and the village bell rang out a sonorous peal.

"Thank you, papa, I don't need any help," was the response as she tripped down stairs.

"I had rather your hair had not been curled, Jane," said he, taking up one of the long ringlets caressingly across his white hand; "I wanted it braided, and the folds laid around your head like the picture of the Greek maiden in that book of poems, and then a wreath of blush roses and myrtle, inwoven with buds and fastened with white ribbon, just here, back of your ear, to lie on your neck; eh, Jennie?"

"Oh, no; that would look pretty for a young woman, but not for a bit of a girl like me; that would be womanly—this is child-like, don't you see, eh, father?" and her laugh rang out pleasantly; but he looked stern as he said, "have it your own way, then, but really Jane, I do object to these flowing lace sleeves. Now if you were to be on the stage, taking a part in the exercises, it would be well enough, but they seem out of place elsewhere; then the night will be cool, I fear."

"Oh I meant to wear my crimson shawl to cover my arms father."

"Pooh, you've no taste whatever, child, you would appear, to any person of refinement, like a young circus rider in full rig."

Poor Jennie reddened at this unkind remark, and turned away to hide the tears of mortification that filled her eyes.

"Take this," said her father, unrolling from a silk paper in the corner of a trunk in his study, a black crape shawl. She took it, tied it on her little gimp hat, and mildly asked if she should wait for him to accompany her.

"No, Jane, I have some writing to do; you walk on down to Mr. Whitfield's, and go with Metta and Laura. Mind you go with them, and try and keep in respectable company."

There it was again—respectable company! the key note on which he was perpetually striking. How weary she was of hearing it. She turned away and walked hurriedly down through the garden; she loosened the strings of her hat to ease the choking in the throat, and rubbed her eyes to clear away the mist, but the gathering tears would come, and she cried aloud, "oh, my mother, my mother! oh, I wish you had not died and left me to live on in this poor lonesome way; I wish I could have died too at the same time," and she sat down by a tree at the road side, while great sobs shook her bosom, and the pent up wail burst out aloud as she buried her face in her hands and bowed her head upon her knees.

"I can't please papa, and I do try so hard, too; I believe if I was an angel he would find fault with me: what can I do?" and she swayed her body backward and forward, as though rocking into quietude the sorrow that had cried aloud in that piteous wail of grief. And there, forgetful that she was not in the privacy of her own little chamber, she sat with her hands tight over her face, moaning low words, meant for her mother in heaven, soothing her wounded spirit, as one would sing low a plaintive lullaby to a sick babe, cradled close on a warm bosom.

Her sobs grew fainter, the crying of her heart stilled, by a

blessed calm, like the repose that earnest prayer yields, and leaning against the tree, so perfect and sweet was the rest of the tired spirit, that she fell asleep.

In less than five minutes after, a young man, who had lately came to Wendall, and was reading law in the office of Smith and Barnes, passed, accompanied by his sister.

"Why, that's Jennie Howland, brother," said Mrs. Barnes, "and I'd better waken her."

"Oh, no, Mary, let her sleep," said he in a pitying tone; "poor child, see the tear traces on her cheeks; oh, aren't she a lovely child! What could have grieved her so?"

"Oh, some little sorrow, likely; you walk on, James, and I will wake her," said Mrs. Barnes in a whisper; "she is so well acquainted with me, but never having seen you, she would be so embarrassed."

He walked on, and when he had turned the angle in the road out of sight, Mrs. Barnes laid her hand softly on Jennie's cheek and whispered, "Jennie! Jennie! come!"

"Mother!" said the dreaming girl, and her lips parted in a glad smile, and a sweet glow lit up her face into a beauty, radiant as an angel's.

"Jennie!" said Mrs. Barnes, and slipping her arm around her, drew her away from the tree and gathered her up to her bosom.

Jennie rubbed her eyes, and sprang to her feet in astonishment, saying: "I had such a sweet dream about my mother; but oh, it was only, only a dream!"

"Bless you Jennie!" said the tender-hearted woman, "I believe angel mothers always hover near their dear children. Oh,

there is no love like a mother's, so deep and pure, and unselfish."

They walked together until they came to Mrs. Whitfield's. Jennie stopped and went with Metta and Laura, as her father had told her to do, although they were girls whom she did not really love. Their mother was a proud woman, one of that class who are governed in all they do by the fear of incurring the displeasure of the world. She had no higher aim in life than to be in the fashion, and do, and say, and live out, whatever was popular. She would rather have beheld her darling girls beheaded, than to have seen them weighed in the balance of popularity, and found wanting. Rather would she see their white souls scarred by deceit, blackened and deformed by lies, and corrupted by impurity, than their reputation should, in the eyes of the world, fall one jot below the standard prim conventionalism has erected.

Hence, none but fashionable teachers taught the Misses Whitfield,—milliners, or modistes, they called them, fitted and made up their wardrobes; and their mother had just been telling them it was fashionable for ladies to lisp, and it was her desire they should adopt it, and to begin that evening when they read their essays on the stage.

The scene that has been witnessed hundreds of times was performed that night; the spacious church was beautifully decorated with evergreens and vines in festoons, and vases of flowers; and white, brown, black, auburn and red headed girls, each one endeavoring to look her prettiest, in snowy book muslins, pink bareges and gay tarletons, with fluttering ribbons, white necks and plump and poor and bony bare arms, com-

pressed lips and haughty heads. Ah, me! what delicious folly and how very sweet to the young participant.

The essays were all made in one mould, and are alike all over this broad green earth—precious little titbits, as harmless as hydropathist baby medicine, and as nauseously sweet.

Strange! everyone said something about the tiny flowahs that hide their modest heads among the leavesah, and the spawklings stahs that bedeck the azuah skyh—and here, invariably, the little hand that happens to have the most rings on it, makes a stunning gesture upwards, accompanied by a killing roll of the eyes. Something is usually said too about sands on the sea shoah, and the glorious queen of day in his chariot of light. These little *earmarks* remind one of a great flock of innocent lambs, each one bearing on its white satiny ear the particular mark of its owner—affectation—that he may recognize his own flock. Dear, harmless lambs! sometimes flirting a bit of pink or white ribbon like a veritable little tail.

After the exercises had closed, and nearly all the assembly had left the house, Jennie missed her shawl and hurried back to look for it. She glided along the slip in which she had sat, feeling for it, and then the one before and behind, but she could not discover it.

The last person in the house, who was carrying a light, went out, and she was left in utter darkness save the moonlight streaming in at the windows.

"Oh, it was mother's shawl!" said she aloud and turned to go out, when a gentleman near the door, who had probably overheard her, stepped in, saying:

"Can I be of service to you, Miss Howland?"

"I have lost my shawl, sir," said she in a low tone, betraying emotion.

"I saw a lady brush a shawl off from the back of your pew, as she passed, and when she observed it she flung it over this seat by the pillar," said he, raising his hat respectfully, and moving forward to the pew he took it and laid it in her out-reached hand.

"Thank you kindly, sir, it was my mother's shawl, and I was grieved for fear I had lost it."

"Allow me to assist you;" and taking it from her, folded and laid it tenderly and gracefully about her shoulders.

Can we not forgive him? when, as he laid the heavy crape folds about her fair shoulders, he, thoughtless, impulsive, ardent lover of all things beautiful, bent forward and softly laid a kiss on her white forehead?

Yes, we forgive him. Does not the Catholic, with a holy zeal, kiss the cross, and press to his lips the beads named for the Saints? Does he not touch with a kiss the garment-hem of the virgin Mary, or the Priest, or the Pope? Such are kisses of homage, devoutly and holily given.

Homage to beauty and truth, and virtue and innocence, prompted the kiss so tenderly laid upon the brow of the child-woman as she stood there, in that temple devoted to the teachings of God's word, stood, bathed in the moonlight, with her strangely intellectual forehead gleaming white as a snowy dove in a nest of curls.

Perhaps James Hamilton, with the vision of a seer, looked away forward, through vistas of gloom and rifts of sunshine, into the years to come, and saw the great promise verified that then lay in swathings of white.

At the church gate, a poor girl, the daughter of her father's tenant, was waiting for her, and Jennie drew her arm within her own trembling one, and they walked homeward. About half way they met Mr. Howland coming to meet them.

"Give me your hand, Jane," said he as he stepped in between her and the girl, Myra Willis, and rudely parted them.

"Come on, Myra," said Jennie kindly, as she saw the girl stop in embarrassment.

"Never mind about Myra," said her father unkindly, as he hurried her along.

When they reached home he told Jennie she really must learn to keep aloof from those who were not recognized in society. He said it was wrong to associate with poor people, such as tenants and millers and coopers and low mechanics, and those who had little or no property. He said he wished her to understand that he was called a genteel farmer, one who merely oversees the work, but never puts a hand to a farming utensil; and he wanted his daughter to learn, now that she stood on the threshold of womanhood, that there was a broad distinction between the classes in society, and that distinction must be kept up.

"Oh this is all wrong, papa," said she shaking her head mournfully; "Myra Willis and Belle are so far superior to Metta and Laura Whitfield. They are so good and sweet tempered and truthful and love God. I always feel good when I am with them, just like I do when I am in a beautiful flower garden and hear the happy birds all about me, and see the blue sky and everything so pure and good. Now when I am with Metta and Laura I hear them talk scornful of poor people and cross to their mother, and grumble at their pa for

not allowing them all the foolish finery they hear of; and they always tire me with a constant flow of talk about their cousins in New York, and the new patterns in embroidery and crochet, and so much light talk that I feel weary with the world and every body in it, and wish I never had been born."

And thus they talked on—that stern, hard man, with so much of poetical beauty in his nature, and so much of cold, unnatural, wicked, world-loving idolatry; and she, the practical yet warm-hearted, pure, natural woman.

Lacking just such women, is the world becoming colder, sterner and more uncharitable, glad smiles are stereotyped and kept ready for use, and tear-fountains and sweet sympathies are fast drying up.

CHAPTER III.

So, there she lay
In calm endurance, like the smitten lamb
Wounded in flowery pastures.

MRS. SIGOURNEY.

DEAR little Alice Lisle! The gray haired old physician holds her hand in his, silently counting the pulsations in that dainty wrist, and then lays it down very gently on the white counterpane, sighs and shakes his head mournfully.

"Oh, in mercy, tell me! tell me!" said Mrs. Lisle catching his arm, her eyes wildly dilated and her pallid lips parted.

"Congestion of the brain," said he hopelessly, as he took his hand from the child's burning forehead, and prepared to administer an opiate.

The babe flung her arms out uneasily and clutched the bed clothes and started as if in fear, then settling down quietly she murmured, "we'll not wear dresses any more then—God will be the papa; he'll give us white robes and golden harps—clear, shiny gold;" and the thin little hands upreached as if receiving something, then closed and seemed gathering it carefully up to her bosom, while a light played over her features. The mother bowed her face on the pillow that held the

bright curly head, dearer to her than all the wealth of earth combined and laid at her feet, and moaned prayerfully.

Cicely, good Cicely, who was never happy unless in assisting and comforting others, reached a glass of water to the poor mother and whispered, "I feel that God will spare her; be cheerful and hopeful;" she then raised the sick child to give her her medicine.

"What is it, Cicy?" said Alice.

"Medicine, dear, to make you well," said Cicely, kissing her burning cheek.

"Is it good or nasty medicine, Cicy?" said the little one, her lip curling as though she dreaded the nauseous dose.

"It tastes very bitter, Allie, but it won't last long, and we hope it will cure you," replied Cicely giving it to her.

"You told me right, Cicy; ah, it is so bitter!" and she lay down, closing her eyes.

In a moment or two the wild delirium crept over her mind again, and she smiled, saying: "Mother said, no more pain—no more sickness—no more crying—and, I expect, no more bitter medicine. Angels love every body and won't scold a little angel at all if it touches their white robes. God takes care of us all there, like Mr. Hartley cares for his little wee lambs."

And so she moaned and talked, occasionally crying out sharply with pain, until she started up and saw her mother weeping.

"Mother cries—what ails you ma?"

"My dear, little Alice," said the mother, "you are very sick, and we are afraid you will go home to heaven and leave us; and I feel as if it would break my heart to let you go. You

are all the baby I've got, and I do love you so! Oh, Allie, poor ma would feel as if it was night all the time, if you was gone to live with God!"

"Why, ma, you told me once God wanted everybody to love him better than anything in this world, and that it was wicked if we didn't."

"I know it, my darling; too well I know that I have permitted you to come in between God and my poor, weak, struggling heart. Sweet, sweet lamb! oh, God, spare her! spare my dear child, to bless and lead me with her sweet prattle and winning ways!" cried the frantic mother, catching her babe and straining her to her bosom.

"Mother," said the child, "I'd like to be an angel and have soft, white wings, and the robe that is waiting for me, and the goldy harp, and hear the sweet music in heaven. Can't you spare me, mother? Cicy would be good to you, and talk to you when your heart was so broke." The mother wept aloud. "Well, ma," said she, her eye-lids beginning to droop heavily from the effects of the opiate, "you know God listens to us when we pray, and gives us what we ask for, so you'd better ask Him to spare me to live with you awhile. Tell him it would clear break your heart. I asked Him once to give me—a set of—china dishes—but—He—hasn't—yet—" and the last words died off the red lip in a slow, broken whisper—the heavily fringed lids swept the hot cheek which sunk down into the pillow slowly, and the heavy breathing showed her asleep.

Oh, what fond mother could say, "Thy will be done," and look back upon the little span of baby-life that was past?

Oh, a sweet path it seemed, through ways of flowers, snow

white, and crimson-hearted, and azure, and pink and gold, sweet, fragrant flowers; and now, with this beautiful remembrance, was the reality to be torn away and only the dream left? Was the light to leave her world? Was a rayless night to fold its heavy shadows about her? Was the flowery past to be converted into a dungeon door of cold granite, to shut down upon her, barring out the blessed air of heaven, and stifling her?

"Oh, God is good and doeth all things well." Weak one, look up to Him in faith, and plead, plead! it shall be even as thou dost desire.

For many days did "baby Allie" hover between life eternal and life earthly. Her father, a quiet man, whose words were few, a noble, manly man, who at any other time would have blushed to have been seen with tears in his eyes, because it seemed effeminate, hung over her bed in anguish of soul. Cicely kept tireless vigils over the sleeping and waking hours, never leaving the little bedside except to snatch a moment's rest. The mother, touched by the suggestion of the delirious babe, that she should ask God to spare her awhile, prayed without ceasing that the cup might pass from her.

The old physician loved Alice as though she were his own grandchild, and did everything for her recovery that was possible. He advised, in the worst stage of her illness, that her long bright hair should be closely severed, that the disease could be more effectually treated; but when he took the scissors and lifted a golden tress, shining as soft, silk floss, he let it drop again, and shook his head sadly.

Cicely cut them all off, and laying them carefully in a paper, pinned it together and put them away.

And so for many days she hovered, like a trembling dove that did not alight, but fluttered its quivering wings, until one evening she opened her eyes gently, and said, "Come here, mother;" and then she put her little warm hand caressingly on her mother's cheek, as she bent down to catch her low words:

"God is not going to give me wings and the goldy harp, ma. I have to stay and be good to you and father, and help you work."

"Bless you, my sweet nestling," said the glad mother, kissing her precious child; and, "Thank God!" said the stricken father, bowing his tearful face upon his hands.

Great joy was in Glen Green, when the tidings came that Allie Lisle was sitting up in the nurse's arms, pale and drooping as a white lily that had nearly faded for want of sunshine and dews, but surely and slowly returning back to the bloom and glow and beauty of healthful young life.

Many a mother clasped her own babe closer to her bosom, and murmured a prayer of thankfulness, when she heard of the beautiful child restored again to its loving mother and proud father.

And many a mother said, "Thank heaven," when the good news came, and tearfully she saw an aching void in her own affections, and felt an invisible love drawing her thoughts heavenward, and saw a little green mound with a white headstone in the old churchyard in the Glen, and the whitest lamb of the home flock lying on the bosom of that Good Shepherd, who sweetly said: "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

As soon as Alice was able to walk about again, her father bought her the coveted tea-set, like little Flora Lee had.

"Why, father, what made you think of buying me such a nice gift? Didn't God make you think of it first? 'cause I've been wishing to Him a good while that I had a set like Flora's?"

"I did it, daughter, because I love you; and when one loves another they like to please them, and see them happy."

"Well, I thank you, dear papa; for now I can keep house, and go and visit with mother, when I get lonesome in afternoons."

Sweet, winsome children—how much of purity and heaven there is in their natures. A treasure beyond all comparison with gold or jewels or pearls, beauty or wisdom or power, is the gift of a sinless babe, the crowning glory of womanhood.

CHAPTER IV.

Harshly falls upon the ear
The doom, "she's not genteel;"
And pitiless is woman, who doth keep
Of "good society" the golden key;
And gentlemen are bound, as are the stars,
To stoop not after rising.

WILLIS.

MABEL HAMMOND had been at her dress-maker's, and in returning home called at the store of Mr. Whitfield. Mabel was a good customer, and that gentleman immediately left the poor woman at the other end of the counter, who was bargaining for a cheap dress, and came up to her, mincing and bowing, and simpering all manner of unmeaning nothings; and then turning to a newly opened case of goods, flung before her a pattern of rich brocade, telling her a dress of that would just suit her complexion and the color of her hair and eyes. Mabel stooped to examine its luster and quality, and the merchant, bending over, whispered:

"Charlie Stanton is an intimate friend of mine, Miss Hammond, and—I thought of you and your extreme good taste in dress, when I was in New York, which accounts for my choosing that particular piece."

"Thank, you," said she, while a pleasurable glow sparkled in her fine eyes.

A truly modest woman, who loved wisely, would have preferred her betrothed to have kept the fact within his own breast; but Mabel was proud and vain, and willing that the world should know she was beloved by Charles Stanton, a rising young lawyer.

"What is the price of this brocade?" asked Mabel, as she held it up admiringly.

"It is the latest style in the city, a beautiful figure and of exceedingly rich colors, very heavy and elegant, and of good width. The lowest I could possibly sell that pattern is—well, you"—and he whispered and looked around, as if to see that no one overheard him—"you shall have it cheaper than any other lady in Wendall—is about—let me see," and he drew down his brows and compressed his lips, and pretended to be counting up the very small item of profit, "you shall have it"—and he held it up prettily enough to tempt all the Eves in creation—"for twenty-three shillings a yard. That just allows me profit enough to pay the freight, and that is a mere trifle. I wouldn't do it for any other woman than Charlie's affianced. I wouldn't let my wife have it for that. Just see the luster;" and he gathered it in folds that hung down temptingly, while he turned it to catch the light and then to fall into the shade. It was perfectly irresistible.

"How many yards are there in the pattern?" said Mabel.

"Eighteen is what all the ladies in New York take. It is to be made with flounces," said he in a soft, assured tone as though no other way would do.

"I'll take it," said Mabel.

"And be the envy of all the ladies in Glen Green and Wendall, as you are already," said he, bowing. "I have brought on some crinoline," he continued. "No ladies in the city wear hoops, they are so ungraceful and balloonish; none but chamber-maids and cooks and servant girls wear hoops. It really is too bad, that the most fashionable ladies must be aped by their servants in this article of dress, but, thank heaven, crinoline is out of their reach; and, as my wife was saying, it is a fine thing; for it is so humiliating to see one's hired girls' clothes quite as expensive as their mistresses'."

"Let me see the crinoline," said Mabel, eagerly.

"This way, if you please;" and she walked into another apartment.

"I think I must have one, Mr. Whitfield," and she selected one worth thirty dollars; then, a snow-white vail, beautiful and elegant enough for a princess, caught her attention, and she took it. A lace mantilla, that just suited her, and harmonized perfectly with the brocade, was likewise put up for her, besides gloves, ribbons, etc., that she thought she needed.

Her father was a physician with a large practice; but it is very rarely that any physician in country or village ever accumulates much property. Mabel had been kindly reminded of this fact many times; but she was selfish and hard-hearted, and thought only of gratifying her own wishes, even though it was at the expense of her father's health and rest and comfort.

What a self-sacrificing life of drudgery does the generous hearted physician lead.

Before Mabel had started home, Mrs. Whitfield came into

the store and insisted on her going into the parlor to rest a few minutes. She went.

"I was so provoked to-day," said Mrs. Whitfield, laying her delicate hands in her lap, and tossing her head affectedly.

"What about? pray tell," said Mabel, who was always ready to listen to light gossip.

"Why, a year or two ago my neighbor here, in this house near our east door, Dr. Harper's wife,* had quite a neat Irish cook, Kathleen she called her, who went out to York State to live with the Doctor's sister; and while there, she married a wealthy young farmer; and then I heard no more of her, and had quite forgotten her.

"This morning I was down street, and while I was gone, a lady called and left her card, saying she was very anxious to see me, and as my health was poor, and I could not go out much, perhaps she would call herself again in the afternoon or to-morrow. The name on the card was Mrs. Kate Wheaton. This afternoon the bell rang and I went to the door, and in came Mrs. Wheaton. She asked me if I did not recognize her. I told her I never had the pleasure of meeting her before.

"Don't you remember Kathleen, who used to come in on Sabbaths, and keep your children while you attended service?' and her smile was beautiful.

"Not Mrs. Harper's cook?' said I, rising indignantly.

"The same,' said she, with as much ease and grace as she would have claimed kin with the best blood of old England.

"Then,' said I, 'I wish you to remember that I am one of the first ladies in Wendall; and by right of birth, you are an

*Mrs. W. T. Bascom, of Columbus, O.

Irish cook; and I have no inclination to overthrow the barrier that is irrevocably between us, placed there by infinite wisdom, the same as between the negro and his master. If you desired to force yourself upon my notice, your business was to sneak around and come in at my kitchen door. An impudent Irish cook in my parlor,' said I, 'is more than I shall bear.'

"She rose and bowed with greater ease and self-complacence than either of us could command, even under the most favorable circumstances."

"You served her right, Mrs. Whitfield," said Mabel, fired with the same indignation; "and I rejoice you could so command yourself. Where did the hussy go then?" said Mabel.

"Well, I watched—I peeped out at the side of the door, thinking perhaps she would sink with anger and shame before she could get out at the gate," laughed Mrs. Whitfield; "but I caught a glimpse of her face as she turned around—she looked a little pale, but I must confess the truth: she did look pure and good and pleasant, and her countenance lit up cheerfully. But it was all assumed, I dare say."

"Oh! certainly," said Mabel, "an ignorant Irish cook couldn't naturally look intelligent and handsome. But where did she go, I wonder?"

"Ah! there's the rub," said Mrs. Whitfield; "she came from, and went to Dr. Harper's. I saw her go in at the gate. Mrs. Harper's such a strange woman. She thinks the beggar in the street is entitled to our kindness, and she makes no distinctions in society. Sometimes I can hardly tolerate her loose ideas; and I have many a time forbidden her to talk so, before Metta and Laura. Dear knows! one has trouble

enough, at best, with their daughters, keeping them up in the fashions, and in the society they belong in. I wouldn't wish you to say anything about it, but I tell you I did give Mrs. Harper a piece of my mind last week, one day, after she'd been out shopping.

"You see, as she went down High street, her attention was attracted by a negro girl, standing beside a box, near some of the stores, crying bitterly. She went right up to the darky, where anybody might have seen her, and took her smutty hand, and asked her if she could do anything to help or comfort her.

"The girl told her, all she wanted was something to do, to maintain herself and baby. It seems from the story that the girl's husband is in the penitentiary; some negro acquaintances of his were detected in counterfeiting, and had just time to hurry to his house and leave a parcel in his care, which contained dies and other things used in making counterfeit money. They were followed there, but had time to escape before the police arrived. Her husband was taken; he could not prove himself clear, suspicion was strong against him, and finally he was imprisoned and his wife and child left destitute. It is a well gotten up story, and Mrs. Harper believed it, and brought the girl home with her and kept her a few days. In that time she went 'round through town, telling the story and eliciting sympathy. One man agreed to give her a house to live in, and another a barrel of flour, and another a parcel of groceries. She washes a day for Mrs. Harper, and the next for Mrs. Barnes, and the next for me, and so on, every day in the week, and gets good wages too. I wouldn't have employed her, only all the lawyer's and doctor's and merchant's wives

did, and I was obliged to do it then. I take care though that she don't come to the table till after we eat, and then I call her in, and shut the doors and go out. I can't bear to see a negro eat! they show their great, glaring white teeth like a crocodile, and eat so greedily and noisily; I'd starve before I'd eat with one of 'em."

"Well, well, we all have our trials here," said Mabel, rising to go.

"Call again, soon," said Mrs. Whitfield, "your sweet face always brings joy with it."

Just as she opened the door she started back, saying in a loud whisper, "Oh, there's my lady cook now, with Mrs. Harper."

"See how close they stick together; she's a farmer's wife; bah! I can smell the clover fields and the milch cows and the hay mows," said Mrs. Whitfield, laughing heartily at her own wit.

"Yes," replied Mabel, "and the onion beds and the pig pens, with their delicious fragrance!" and the two peeped out smothering their merry laughter. They turned in at Dr. Harper's gate; he met them and opened it for them, touching his hat politely, saying: "a pleasant day, ladies."

"Well, she is handsome anyhow, but I presume her complexion caught its clear tint from her pails of foamy milk;" and Mabel tried to laugh again.

"Mrs. Harper should not be tolerated by 'our set' any longer, for her daring to associate with a low born Irish cook," said Mrs. Whitfield.

"Tis too bad, indeed," said Mabel, and her lip curled scornfully.

CHAPTER V.

'Twas full many a nameless meaning
My poor words can never say,
Felt without the need of utterance,
That had won her heart away.

ALICE CARY.

Two years have glided away freighted with joys and sorrows, bright dreams and stern realities, into the past.

Not many changes have they brought to Wendall and Glen Green. Mabel is still the same proud, queenly girl; her betrothed is pursuing his practice in a thriving village in New York.

Cicely, the same meek little creature, is still going about doing good, carrying blessings with her wherever she goes. Her face is pale and spiritual, and Mrs. Lisle and her mother often tell her, they fear there is a worm in that rose-bud heart of hers, but she laughs in reply, saying she means to be a nun some day, and that they may yet hear of Sister Cicely doing a good work among the Sisters of Mercy, in Baltimore or Emmitsburg, and then her laugh rings out merrily in contradiction. She often receives letters from her cousins, Mattie and Will Grayson, in Emmitsburg, and sometimes they send her

flowers from the beautiful hills surrounding the Abbey, and descriptions of the old chapel, and of the Abbess and the Sisters, and of their pious and devoted lives, shut out from all the bustle and hum of busy life, as they necessarily are.

Mr. Hammond is a good deal involved in debt, but hopes, if health and strength are spared him, he will succeed in retaining the character of an honest man, one who would scorn to defraud a fellow being. Heavy bills, that Mabel has contracted without his knowledge or consent, have caused him much difficulty.

Jennie Howland had blossomed into a beautiful woman, but she was not happy. Her sympathies were all with the poor and struggling and weak and fallen. The great claims and needs of humanity were ever present in her thoughts: plans for bettering the condition of the unfortunate mass were working in her brain, and wearily she went through duties incumbent upon her that yielded her no pleasure, and only tended to harden her too sensitive heart towards those whose aims in life were narrow and low and selfish.

This autumn evening, in which we look upon her, after a period of two years, we find her sitting musing, her head leaning upon her hand and an open book lying in her lap. She is dressed in black, with a little white collar about her fair neck. No jewels shame her person, no gaudy colors or useless embroidery ever mar that beauty, which, "unadorned, is adorned the most."

If we could lift the veil, lily-white, and look within her sanctuary soul, we would see her thoughts earnestly centred on one subject—the incident that transpired on the evening of commencement.

She never met James Hamilton since that eventful night, to exchange any more than mere passing compliments, except the evening before he left Wendall to visit his mother in Michigan. It was at a party at Mrs. Whitfield's. The ambitious mother was endeavoring, by all artful means, to ensnare him as a suitor for Laura.

"Will you be sorry, girls, when I am gone?" said he to them laughingly, "will you miss me in your pleasant circle?"

"Yes, yes!" was the lively response from all except Jennie, who was more reserved than any of the rest.

"Here's Jennie Howland," said he, advancing and taking her hand, "she won't say whether she will miss me or not."

Jennie rose to her feet and essayed to speak, but she was a shy, bashful girl, and the words she would have spoken only moved her lips and died away in a whisper. The smile, too, that she tried to bring out brightly, to hide her embarrassment, froze on her lip and only heightened it. Poor Jennie!

"How awkward she is;" whispered Laura to a grinning girl sitting beside her, and in so loud a tone as to be distinctly heard by Jennie and Hamilton both.

Dear Jennie! Compared with that group of females, she was as a diamond shining among mere glittering tinsel—a precious pearl gleaming white in the pure depths of the sea, while fading and scentless flowers drifted on the surface above it.

When she heard these heartless words, the tears came into her eyes, and the rosy blushes into her cheeks, which only increased her mortification.

Kate Barnes, pitying her, drew the attention of the girls to a fine steel engraving in a late magazine that lay on the table.

They all gathered around to look at it, thus affording Hamilton an opportunity of leading her to a sofa, which he did, still retaining her hand.

"Dear Jennie," he whispered, "are you angry with me? I have wished an interview with you for a long, long time, and you have avoided me. Tell me, before I go away, Jennie, if you are offended with me; if you have been for two long years for that expression of feeling, which could not be told in language, that I gave you in the old church. You remember, Jennie. Every time since then that I have looked into your intelligent countenance, I have longed to hear you say that you forgave me."

"I do say it, Mr. Hamilton," said she. "Peace and good will be between us," and she gently released her hand.

"Thank you, Jennie Howland," said he, warmly. "Such an assemblage," he continued, "has generally but little pleasure for me, and were it not that our natures demand sociability, and by right must give and receive it, I should hardly mingle in parties like this," he said in a low tone, bending his head nearer to her.

"I will leave it to Hamilton," said Metta in a loud, bantering voice. "Very well," was responded by Laura; and he rose to join the girls about the table.

"I shall send you a long letter as soon as I get home to mother's," he said in a whisper. "Will you read it all Jennie?"

She bowed her head in reply, and he left her. It was a plot to draw him away from her side, lest she should come in between Laura and her mother's ambitious plans.

Jennie's father called to walk home with her, and when she

bade the party "good night," and Mr. Hamilton "farewell," he held her hand in his closely, and looked into her face as if to read what tidings there were in the depths of her blue eyes; if a thought of himself lay hidden there, tenderly, watchfully guarded—a secret that never mortal eye had rested upon save hers, in the sanctity of her own little chamber, apart from all the world, beheld only by the All-Seeing and the blessed angels who hovered nightly about her pillow. He closer pressed her hand, then dropped it, and turned abruptly away.

Every word that had passed between them, every look he had given her, were treasured mementoes that each day Jennie looked upon and hoarded, as a miser would count and gloat over his shining treasures. But alas! for the young heart, in which the sweet dream lay as purely as the dew-drop in the snowy bell of the lily.

"He never said he loved me," she whispered to herself, as she sat alone in the maple grove below their lovely cottage home, "but something tells me he does—and he is so good and so noble. Oh! I could die for him!" and the tears streamed down her cheeks as she closed her eyes on the beautiful landscape, that lay under the deep blue of heaven, bathed in the glory of a summer sunset.

Away to the south, spread out the hills, and meadows, and rocks, and dells, and wild scenery of Glen Green—as grand a picture as the most fastidious artist could desire. To the west, uprose, as if daring the clouds, the grim old mountain peak, Monadnock, in New Hampshire. The tints of sky and clouds seemed mingled with the brown and green of its sterile and woody heights.

Strange, when the certainty that we are beloved, warms and thrills and satisfies our very being, that all earth appears so very beautiful, and perfect, and pure, and every person whom we know, seems invested with new and good qualities that we never before discerned. We grow more liberal-minded and generous and forgiving and loving; not a poor wretch who wanders uncared for over the earth, whom we could not take tenderly and affectionately by the hand, and freely comfort and assist all that lay in our power. This poor, worldly affection that almost makes earth-angels of friends, may be meted out to us in honeyed words and hollow phrases, and be as unreal as the mists of the morning and as evanescent.

God forgive the deceiving one, who dares to pollute the priceless jewels of truth by his unholy touch, tarnishing their lustre by unclean hands, and leaving the viper Distrust, coiled among the banks of white flowers which he crushingly treads with unhallowed feet!

CHAPTER VI.

Oh, woman! in our hours of ease,
Uncertain, coy and hard to please,
And variable as the shade
By the light, quivering aspen made;
When pain and anguish wring the brow,
A ministering angel thou.

SCOTT.

"A LETTER from Charles," said Mabel, as she took the little package, just brought from the post office, from the hand of her father, who had ridden up to the gate on his return from visiting a patient. "But the direction is not in his writing, and the name is spelled Mabelle," said she hurrying past her anxious mother to sit in her own room to read the precious missive. It contained but a few lines, and read:

"DEAR MADAM: It is my painful duty to inform you that there are many cases of small pox in our town, and your friend, Mr. Charles Stanton, is one of the unfortunate victims.

"A skillful physician is in attendance, and everything shall be done for him that medical skill can devise

Respectfully,

"W. H. LORAINÉ."

It was not a shriek of affright, or a moan of anguish, that came from the lips of the poor girl, but a low, quivering cry, as of one having a limb slowly amputated by unskillful hands.

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Oh, Mabel! Mabel! beautiful, queenly Mabel! With that piteous cry she flung her arms upward and rushed to her mother, and laid her head upon the old resting place—the maternal bosom. And what a resting place is that!

Oh, man of the world! footsore and weary and aching from the toils and trials of life, struggling up the narrow way, over flinty rocks, and in thorny paths, when the world presses hard, and smiles and good deeds and kind words are few and unreal, and only bought with paltry gold; panteth not your tired spirit for a moment's rest on her bosom? for the light of her smile, and the blessed cheer that droppeth like sweet manna from her lips?

God pity those whose sweetest earthly rest is voiceless, silent in the grave—gone to receive her reward.

"Mabel, darling child, don't grieve so," said the mother, as she wound her arms about the distracted girl, and smoothed her hair, and spoke words of consolation; "father shall go right to him and cure him and bring him home to us."

Still the tearless cries quivered up from her heart like the moans of a dying child, as she lay on her mother's bosom, looking wildly up into her face. How pleading that look was, and how utterly helpless. Just as though a knife was thrust into her bosom, and the agonizing, appealing gaze said, "Take it away, mother."

"I know it will kill me! poor Charlie—mother, with no one to care for him, only as he buys their attention."

After a time her wildness grew calm, and the tears flowed freely. Then she would listen to reason, and lay quietly with her head on a pillow, while the good woman smoothed her

hair and cooed soothingly a lulling "there, there," as mothers hush their restless babes.

When her father came in he spoke cheerily, and said he would start on the first train in the morning to Claremonte.

What a change in the haughty Mabel of the day before and the Mabel of to-day! Yesterday she was tall and queenly and straight as the mountain pine, whose height had never been bent in tempestuous wrath; her lustrous hazel eyes, as superior as are the stars of steady ray in the midnight horizon, to the reflected stars in the turbid waters of a miasmal pond; her features regular, her lips full and beautifully curved, her wealth of auburn hair wavy and worn in a style becoming her form and face.

To-day, she sat bowed as though years of toil and hardship and privation had rolled slowly and heavily over her. Her eyes were swollen with weeping, her hair disheveled, her hands lying in her lap idly and listlessly. There were costly jewels glittering on her fingers, but they seemed unnatural, as would a wreath of orange flowers and the bridal veil on the brow of the pallid and ghastly dead.

Oh, it was pitiful to see the change! To see first sorrow, like a bird of evil omen, alighting on that young and world-loving spirit, and folding its black wings there, and croaking its dismal song, sadder song than any burial chant that ever was crooned over the heathen dead.

That evening, when the little family assembled for evening worship, tears went up with their prayers like incense.

When Mabel parted with her parents, to retire to rest, she kissed them both tenderly, while she smiled with the same old

joyous smile, only it was softer, and her lips were white and compressed, showing determination.

"God bless my poor Mabel," said her father as he let his hand linger lovingly on her head.

It was not until past midnight that they fell asleep, and when they awoke early in the morning they were surprised to find Mabel already risen and in the dining room with the girl, who had breakfast quite ready. She wore her gray traveling dress, and her trunk stood by the door.

"Now, mother," said she, meeting her in the bed room door, "if you love me, the time is come in which you can prove it. I am going with or without your consent and blessing, to nurse and take care of Charles. Father has consented, and you will, surely. If Charles dies, I can not, will not survive him; and if I stay here I will be forever tortured with the idea that I did not do my duty. I am under obligations to take care of him now, the same as though I were his wife."

"My child!" cried her mother, "you will disgrace yourself and family, and I shall never feel like holding up my head again. Oh, that I must live to see this great trial! that the only child of my bosom should bring my gray hairs in sorrow to the grave!"

"Pooh, wife!" said Doctor Hammond, "you disgrace your womanhood in talking this way; would you not have done the same for me had I been in Charlie's place and you in our noble daughter's? You remember, in Mabel's infancy we took the necessary precaution to prevent her ever taking the small pox. She goes well fortified thus, and the panoply of a woman's devoted love is about her too. Nothing can harm her."

"Oh, what will the Whitfields and Barnes and Harpers say! I can't! I can't consent to see you rush into open disgrace! Mabel! oh, oh! I had rather you had never, never been born!" cried out the poor, weak, vain mother, leaning on the arm of her husband.

"Let the Whitfields, etc., go to the dev—, let them mind their own business. Had it not been for the Whitfields and their set, our Mabel and her foolish mother had been far nobler women than they are—if I must speak out my private opinion," said the good old man, growing redder in the face; and turning away he caught sight of the faithful girl, Giddy, who had been their housekeeper for many long years—ever since the time Mrs. Hammond had found out it was disgraceful to do all one's own house-work.

"What do you say about her going, Giddy?" said he, when he saw her looking at the group, and wiping her eyes on the corner of her check apron.

"I want ye to let her go—it'll break her poor heart if she don't git to, and I b'leve she'll cure him right off with her presence."

"Thank you, my good Giddy," said the anxious and impulsive Mabel, catching her round her fat neck and kissing her red face that was all aglow from her efforts to make "the best toast in the world for breakfast."

Mabel and her mother whispered together, while Giddy took up the breakfast, and "Thank you, mother," said Mabel aloud, as the doctor came in and seated himself at the table. Mabel ran to him and whispered, "She says I may go if we are married as soon as I get there."

"That will lessen the disgrace somewhat," said Mrs. Ham-

mond, with an effort of submission, "and we will say that he sent for her."

"Poor woman!" said her husband in mock commiseration.

Mabel drank a cup of tea, and in less than an hour was on her journey.

CHAPTER VII.

From her own dear, domestic bower,
From deep, confiding love,
From earth's unshaded smile, she turned
To purer bliss above.

Mrs. SIGOURNEY

It is midnight in the humble home of Mr. Lisle. His wife took a severe cold, while nursing Alice during her illness two years ago, and now she lies on her death bed. The watchers have grown weary, and are sleeping, all except Cicely Marshall, who sits by the little stand near the bed-side reading in a low voice from the Book of God. Mrs. Lisle is gazing intently into her face, while she is drinking in the precious promises that abound with comfort and instruction upon those hallowed pages. She held up her wasted hand, and Cicely, understanding the token, laid down the Book and bent over her inquiringly.

"Come nearer, Cicely," said she, and her voice was low and tremulous as the sounds dying away from the chords of a sweetly toned instrument. "Not much longer shall I need your care; and there is only one thing that lies heavily upon my mind. It is only the thought of my bereft babe, that keeps

my spirit here in this frail body. Oh! it seems as if I could not leave her! If she were a boy, I would be less fearful; but a woman's life is a great mystery. She may have to walk through dark trials, deep waters may encompass her, and she may not have a friendly arm on which to lean, or a kind bosom to pillow her head; and loving words may be withheld, and her life made very, very dreary. The snares of the world may entangle her unwary feet, and she may fall, pierced through with many sorrows. Oh! my little Alice! may she learn to rely on the strong arm that never fails, and put her trust in the God of the motherless! But He will care for my child. He has promised, and His promises never fail."

"While I live, Mrs. Lisle, your child shall be tenderly guarded, I promise you, here with the eye of God looking down upon us," said Cicely, holding the invalid's thin hand, and looking upward as though she would register in heaven the vow she had so earnestly spoken.

"Oh! thank you kindly!" whispered the dying woman. "But—but—oh! Cicely! if I say anything now, as I stand here on the verge of eternity, in the sight of the portals of heaven, that offends you, can you not forgive me?" and she turned her eyes fully and strangely wild into Cicely's face.

"What would you say?" asked Cicely, looking upon the poor woman through tears.

"Say you will forgive me, first," she whispered; "that nothing I ask of you now will be remembered after I am gone, as unduly selfish."

"Dear one! I love you too well to believe you would do a wrong or a selfish act; and let me assure you that any dying

request you make shall be held religiously sacred," said Cicely, tenderly.

For a moment the exhausted woman lay resting with her arms flung up on the pillows, and her hair pushed back from her brow. "Let me rest," said she, breathing with difficulty.

The night was warm, and Cicely opened the doors wider, then going to the little cot where Allie slept, she parted the curtains and looked in.

"How sweet is the repose of childhood!" she thought, as she gazed upon the fair sleeper, with one fat arm above her head, and half buried among bright curls, the other lying on the white quilt, and her plump neck and bosom uncovered. "No wonder," she whispered to herself, "that the spirit lingers and lingers after the voice has said, 'Come, and I will give you rest.' What a magnet is such a beautiful, sinless child! The strong attractive power can scarcely be broken, even when the escort of angels, with waiting wings half folded, are lingering until the farewell be spoken."

Cicely walked out into the fresh air. It came balmily down from the clustering pines which were humid with the night dews. The morning-glory vines curtained the brown walls of the little cottage and swung in twisted wreaths from the tops of the windows; and a fountain came with a cheering song leaping down the rocky hillside above the house, until it dashed into mossy stone troughs, and was carried away, below the garden, when the noisy brook was suffered to run at will down through the grotto into the almost inaccessible recesses of the Glen.

"Look and see if the women in the bed room are asleep," said Mrs. Lisle, when Cicely went to her bedside with a glass

of fresh water. She stood within the bed room door and heard them both breathing regularly as in deep sleep. She closed the door gently and went to the bedside.

"You have promised to forgive, and not blame me, if I say anything that wounds your sensitive heart," spoke the dying woman, as she took Cicely's hand and looked up into her face.

"I have said you cannot frame a sentence that would make me think you unjust or selfish, my more than friend," said Cicely, as she knelt down beside the bed, her cheek on the same pillow with the invalid's.

"You love my baby, Cicely?"

"As though she were flesh of my flesh," was the reply.

"Will you, when I am gone and she is motherless, will you take her to your own bosom, and love her and guard her as though she were your own?"

"I will do it," was the reply.

"Cicely," and the whisper quivered low and tremulously, and a wasted arm crept very softly around her neck, and drew her cheek down until it lay upon her own—"Cicely, can you not love *him* too? Can you not cheer him, and come like an angel of light into this desolate home and build up the broken altar? Oh! can you not be his wife and her mother?"

Cicely lay on her breast, like a wounded dove with its white wings broken and trailing, and the shaft of death in its bleeding side. She shivered as though the winter's blast, white with piercing sleet, was drifting icy cold upon her bared bosom.

"Have you ever loved, Cicely?" said the invalid. She

felt the poor girl choking down the swelling sobs, upon her breast, while the strange shiver crept over her whole frame.

With a brave effort, as though she had been struggling with an unseen enemy, and had been crowned with triumph by the shouted plaudits of those who love the right and the victory, did Cicely Marshall rise to her feet and say: "Never yet have I heard the blessed words in any manly voice, '*I love you, Cicely.*'"

There she stood, erect and silent, a picture that had wrung tears from a heart even seared and hardened by crime, had they known her beautiful life, and the secret that she held closely hugged to her breast, lest its trail should be seen sometimes, in the pallor that stole over her face, or the flush that followed the careless mention of one name—a name worn no more on earth.

Alas! poor Cicely! Had there been less of the heavenly, and more of the earthly obscuring the vision of the invalid, she had read the truth at a glance, even in the uncertain lamp light that glimmered in the room. Cicely's face looked haggard and bloodless, and her eyes strangely dilated, and deep and earnest in their touching expression.

"Ah, it is well, it is well; I have been dreaming in all these years—living in a dream of my own creation—and now it is time I waken. God, help me!" she said to herself, as she stood there looking down upon the dying woman. Then she turned and walked to the door and back again, two or three times.

"It shall be as you wish, my dear friend; my life thus far, I fear, has been almost useless to myself and others; it shall be aimless no longer, for I will endeavor, by God's help, to be

all you have been to him and to her," said Cicely, in a firm, low voice, that would have broken into whispers and wails had she not strove to nerve herself to act nobly, fulfilling the duties that a dying one had craved of her.

"And now let me bless you, my own—the steward who is to hold my treasures in keeping until they are demanded," said the feeble voice; and Cicely knelt and bent her head forward, and the little, shadowy hand lay lightly among the tossed and disordered folds of hair, that she had pushed back from her forehead as though it was a heavy crown of thorns, burning and pressing into her temples, that she longed to fling off.

The blessing was in low words—solemnly as a benediction is pronounced over a band of mourners, was it spoken—beautiful words of thankfulness and great gratitude and blessings, on the noble girl who had sacrificed her youth on the altar of a love as pure and as passionless as an angel's.

A step glided noiselessly into the chamber, and Mr. Lisle stood at the bedside of his wife.

Cicely still knelt, and the hand was lying on her head, but the exhausted woman was not speaking; she had fallen into a slumber. She stole quietly away from her and went out to the fountain and bathed her face and hands and forehead, and tried to think she was in a strange oppressive dream. Mr. Lisle asked her to lie down and rest, and he would watch with his wife. She awoke her mother, who was asleep in the bedroom, and then went up stairs; but not to sleep. She lay and listened to the musical flow of the fountain, and the plaintive nightingale among the breezy pines, on the heights above the grotto, until the very sounds that would once have been sweet

music-songs of harmonious beauty to her ear, grated mockingly and harsh.

"God has always upheld me," she whispered to herself, in looking back over the past few hours, "and now shall I doubt his love and goodness and cry out in anguish, as though his strong arm was withdrawn:

"There is no sorrow for the earnest soul
That looketh up to God in perfect faith!"

Then let me still trust him, and not mourn over fancied ill and raise up spectres in the future, to frighten me out of my good resolves." And with an earnest prayer, that grace be given her according to her trials, she strove to dismiss all fears and forebodings, and look serenely upward, ready to meet her destiny, if it come bathed in sunshine and bright as the morning, or folded in the darkness of midnight's gloomiest shadows.

"Bring Alice to me," said the dying woman.

Her father took her up in his arms, with her head still lying on the pillow, and carried her to her mother. With a strength that surprised them all, she turned over and reached out her arm to have the child laid there once more.

"Wake up, darling, and see mother! wake, Allie!" said she, and her voice had the fullness of buoyant health in it, and her eyes the same sparkle as on her bridal morn.

"My ma!" said the little child half opening her eyes; then, creeping closer to the poor, shrunken bosom, and nestling her curly head there, fell into a sweet sleep.

"Alice," spoke the father, "mother wants you." But she stirred not.

"Let me die with my baby on my breast, death will come with all his terrors laid aside, smiling like an angel on an errand of mercy," and she drew Alice closer, pressing her lips upon the little forehead.

"William, you have been a kind husband always, you have made my life very pleasant. I grieve to leave you, but God will care for my husband and my sweet babe. If sorrows ever press heavily upon you, walk closer to Him—keep your eye on His promises; do your whole duty to God and man, living constantly in view of death. Oh! I am weary of this season of pain and sickness. Yet life is full of joys, and looks bright from this green shore where I am standing waiting for the guide; but the joys of heaven are fairer than the brightest dreams that ever found a place on earth. Of your future in this life we have talked before.

"Cicely, I love you dearly; next to my own I lament to leave you, and never look upon your earthly face again. Think kindly of me ever, Cicely, and may God bless you all—farewell. And now I wait for the outreaching hand to lead me on."

She closed her eyes as if to slumber—all was silent as the grave, save the suppressed sobs of those present, and the tuneful play of the fountain.

"How sweet the tune the old fountain sings! in all these brief years I have never tired of its one gleeful song," she murmured smiling. Then starting, she suddenly exclaimed, "How melodious its music! if it moaned you might weep, but hark to the strains! it has caught a new air! ringing notes

rise and swell and fall, filling the very air as flowers scatter fragrance on the winds. Glory and praise and anthems and hallelujahs, sweeter than the songs of harps and cymbals! Glory to God in the Highest, is the mighty anthem they sing!" and starting and reaching up her white arms, a seraphic smile stole over her angelic countenance, as her husband gently laid her head upon the pillow—the breaths fluttered—and all was still. The white-winged escort had come—they were gone.

CHAPTER VIII

Nobleness was bound like a tiara to her brow,
And every motion breathed of it.

WILLIS.

"Oh! shrive me, shrive me, holy man!"

The hermit crossed his brow.

"Say quick," quoth he, "I bid thee say,

What manner of man art thou?"

RHIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER.

"Did any letters come to-day, father?" said Jennie Howland.

"None for you child. Why do you ask? was you expecting one?" and he looked penetratingly into her face.

Jennie had never told him a lie in her life, but there was now a gulf between them; and alas for father! alas for child! the gulf was growing wider and deeper and more impassable. Jennie was warm-hearted and kind, and loved all God's creatures—loved to minister to the needy and give of the blessings that affluence had bestowed upon her. She loved to sit down and talk with the poor mother, whose daily avocation was to earn a livelihood for the family around her on the buzzing little spinning-wheel, or the clattering loom.

She often regretted that her station in life carried her above the necessity of engaging in such healthful labors.

She was no idle dreamer, who would sit with folded hands, looking for flaws and blemishes in the great created around her, mourning over the falsity that made society like a tinted apple with a rosy rind, but within a rotten core, nauseous and bitter to the taste. Because man treated his fellows with fraud and deception and base inhumanity, scarcely permitting the poor to drag out a stifled and meager existence; because nabobs, banded together, rode over the poor tenants like a very Juggernaut in crushing power—for none of these lamentable evils did Jennie sit down and indulge in misanthropic feelings and make herself miserable.

She was thoroughly practical and benevolent. Not that maudlin, sentimental generosity that made her put her name in full on charity papers, with a sum annexed that would be read with envious eyes by her female friends, and whispered about in sewing circles and charity balls, and after prayer meetings. Nothing of this.

Her father's nature was singularly poetical; but a vain, fashionable and aristocratic mother's teachings had warped and stunted the beautiful vine, and now he stood out in the world an enigma to himself and others. An early and unfortunate attachment had tended somewhat to make him misanthropic and suspicious. But for the sparkling vein of poesy that flowed all through his being, like a singing rill in a desert, and his existence had held few charms, and garnered but little of the divine goodness so easily gathered in a pilgrimage from the cradle to the tomb.

"You didn't say, Jane, from whom you expected a letter,"

said her father, looking up from the *Tribune* that lay spread out before him.

"No one in particular, father; only I wrote to cousin May Irving last, and I thought it time she would reply," said Jennie, looking up with perfect composure.

"Perhaps your letter wasn't worth answering," said he, coolly, and taking up his hat, he left the room.

Little waspish words! they are more stinging than a downright burst of insolent imprecations. Poor Jennie! She was young and impulsive, and not a chord in their two natures chimed in unison; and instead of thinking, "Poor father! he has had so much trouble that he has grown cold and irritable, and I must be very patient with him," she dropped the child's apron she was slyly making, and leaned her head on the workstand, and wept bitterly, crying out sharply as though a half closed wound had been suddenly probed anew. Only for a brief time though, like a quick dash of summer rain that came and laid the dust, came the burst of tears, settling the dust of all turbulent passion, and leaving the vision clearer, the blue of the sky bluer, than before.

As the nun, with veiled face, bows before the virgin Mary, murmuring her sorrows and counting her beads, repentant of all misdeeds, so did Jennie steal into the little study, and, reaching for her mother's picture, slid quietly down upon her knees by the large easy chair, and held the shadowy semblance to her lips, then to her cheek, as though receiving its mute kiss, all the time talking low to it, and whispering sweet words and sad plaints. And there she talked to it: "Oh! mother! my life is such a struggle! The thralldom of slavery binds me into captivity. Why did you leave me, mother?"

Oh! was your life happy, or was it like mine? If it was, it is well with you now, and I will not wish you back again. I want father to love me, and to understand me, and both of us work together for good. Dear mother! do you see me all the time? Oh! I know you love me!" and she held the picture to her face as though it was warm with life and love, and heard her words, and returned her caresses.

Had her father seen her then, he would have pronounced it all mimicry, mere pantomime or child's play. He might have observed artistic beauty in her graceful position; for his spiritual eye was critical in detecting the faultless outline, the perfectly rounded limb, the curve of the dimpled shoulder, the delicate, peachy tint of the cheek, and the sweep of the long silken lash.

The Mecca-shrine of his soul was the perfectly beautiful in nature. No sympathies went out from his heart that could mingle in the strong tide of joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, smiles and frowns, struggles and victories and triumphs, that sweep and surge in this wide sea of humanity. He stood alone, buried in the cold depths of Alpine snows, like the lone flower the noble young adventurer, Dr. Kane, found and pressed to his lips in his unutterable gladness, living within itself, no warm sunshine gleaming goldenly down upon it, and no wooing winds bearing away a tithe of its fragrance.

While Jennie was communing with her mother's picture, her father sat alone on the margin of a little lake a mile from his residence, reading a letter.

The old man, who rattled along in his rickety yellow dear-born, in the road that wound down to the damp flags that skirted the water's edge, peeped out to see the neat skiff

which lay moored in the shades of the drooping alders, and was near enough to whisper to Mr. Howland; but they saw not each other. The old man was busy thinking how it came about that he had been cheated out of a half dollar in bargaining away his load of butter and cheese; and Mr. Howland was forgetful of all around him save the contents of the letter he held in his hand. It was from James Hamilton, from Albion, Michigan, directed to Jennie Howland. He had taken it from the office that morning, and had stolen away and crossed the lake to read it. He saw it was the first letter Hamilton had written her, and he determined it should be the last. After he had read it over twice, and its most beautiful and eloquent passages many times, he folded and carefully replaced it in his pocket. What was he to do? He sat thinking with his brow upon his hand, musing as though, instead of glad tidings that would bring joy to any father's heart, he had heard intelligence that pained and grieved him.

Not a thought of the wrong he was inflicting upon the innocent and unconscious girl, crossed his mind. He was unhappy, and it seemed to be the demand of his nature to shut happiness away from others as one would fold the curtains about a child's crib to shut out the light.

What a glow of pleasure would have made radiant the face of the lone girl, and how freely would she have wept glad tears, had the letter come to her hands! What a ripe golden harvest did that unfortunate missive contain! And she was hungering for the bread of love, while the destroyer stole into the yellow field, and like rust and weevil and wrathful winds, the proffered wealth was laid low ere the slanting sickle gleamed like molten silver in the sun-rays, or the

gleaner came toiling after, or the garner held its bounteous hoard.

Alas! Jennie! thy evil star shines with steady ray in the horizon.

The letter was a declaration of love, not of an affection that has been broken upon and dealt out by piecemeal until but a nibbled fragment remained, as a bit of confectionary scarred by teeth-prints and soiled by finger marks, but a love worthy to be laid on the shrine of a priestess, worthy of all acceptance.

It was a beautiful letter—he had staked all his hopes in it; if he lost—he wished no response unless given favorably.

Mr. Howland determined not to speak about the letter, and if the time ever did come in which anything was said about it, he would say it was probable it had miscarried. He resolved, though that time never should come.

When he returned home, tea was waiting, and everything wore an inviting appearance, from the cool parlor with its grand old pictures and open windows and trailing vines, down to the tea table, in the centre of which stood a tiny vase filled with white flowers, flanked with the more substantial necessities of life, all laid tastefully on snow white dishes of the finest Sevres china. Jennie knew how to please the epicurean taste of her fastidious father. As far as her nice discernment led, did she bend herself to meet and minister to his taste, even when they came within the limits of foolish fancies and whims. But her sense of right and justice extended far beyond his, and this she did not cramp and distort to meet and mingle with his contracted views; it would have been wronging her better nature, and doing violence to her nobler and higher aims.

"Have you spent a pleasant day, father?" said Jennie, as she poured him a cup of tea, speaking in a slow, sweet tone of voice, for the events of the day had cast a mellow autumn tint upon her feelings, making her feel that she loved every person, and could overlook all unkindness in them with ready forgiveness.

"Very pleasant, child," was the reply, "I was out on Crystal Lake, enjoying a quiet little sail."

The stimulating tea, and light flaky biscuit, were having a desired effect.

"Has there been any person here to see me, Jane?" said he carelessly, as he drew towards him a saucer of strawberries, over which the cream was lazily spreading.

Jennie rose and reached the sugarbowl, an exquisitely beautiful thing, over to him. It was of pearl-white china, in imitation of three shells laid together—the lid being a separate shell of elaborate finish.

"Yes, father," said she, slowly, "Mr. Armstrong came to see if you would not take the young horse back that you sold him; he is lame, and Mr. Armstrong thinks he must have been so before he got him."

"A bargain is a bargain; I didn't sell the horse to him in the night—he bought him with his eyes open, and it was a fair bargain. I shall not take him back again;" said her father, growing red in the face.

"You didn't know he was lame, father—you are not to blame at all, though it is a pity a poor man like him, who has a large family to support, should lose anything in this way, especially in buying of a man as able to lose as you are; oh,

"I wish the loss had been ours," said Jennie, and she spoke truthfully.

"When a man makes a bargain, if he is honorable, he will not want to retract," said Mr. Howland, taking another biscuit.

"But, father, you would surely be willing to lose half the value of the horse, wouldn't you?"

"Indeed, I would not!" was the decided reply. "The great booby! it is well for him that I wasn't at home."

"Oh, papa! I cannot bear to hear you talk that way. The poor man told me he had a family of six children, and his wife had such poor health, and that he made his living by renting fields here and there, wherever he could get one. He had two good horses, and one of them got into a clover field in the night and ate too much, and swelled up and died the next morning. His team was broke up then, and he bought a horse of you to make it up. He did look so spiritless and broken-hearted I could have cried for him," said Jennie sorrowfully.

"I must confess you are well posted, Jennie; talking about renting, and ragged young ones and starved horses, and the disastrous results of eating too much clover, and ending by dropping a tear or two over the man or the horse, I didn't understand exactly which," said her father assuming a hearty laugh; "you talk like a real barefooted, nutbrown country girl. Say, Jane, shan't we pay a visit, or make a call, rather, on Mrs. Dobbins or Mrs. Hobbs or Snobbs, or whatever her name is, and condole with her on the loss of that ere critter o' theirs! ha, ha!"

Jennie laughed a little, but it was only to compliment her father for his sportiveness.

"Earnestly, father, I must say that I do hope you will think

seriously about the poor man, and conclude to take the horse back. It is not only obligatory upon us to *let* the poor live, but to *help* them to live. You know we should, in all our conduct, and in our dealings with our neighbors, live in view of the hour in which we leave this earth; and strive to do nothing to bring remorse to our dying moments. Oh, it is such a blessed pleasure to do right! The consciousness it brings, when we lie down at night, makes sleep come with a double blessing."

Oh, like glowing coals of fire, heaped upon an unclosed wound, were these earnest words. The father could have groaned aloud under their burning weight.

Taking up his hat he walked out into the garden, whispering, "Ah, she said it was a blessed pleasure to do right; it almost seems she knew about the letter, and what I have done—but that cannot be. What plebeian notions the child has, in spite of all I have taught her. One would think, to hear her talk, she was the daughter of some country curate." And then he talked to himself, as he walked along the handsome paths of his flower garden, which was all abloom, "Now there's Rankin, he knew the horse was not sound, he told me of it first, and that was why I offered him for sale; but I think if it is to be settled by law, he will not tell of it; still I think it won't come to that, if I can frighten the fellow out of it! I think I have done well in getting rid of the horse before the lameness grew any worse! How well Puss did plead; no wonder young Hamilton loves her—if he is as woman-hearted as she is, they would be as poor as church-mice in three years, if he married her. But that will never come to pass, if I can help it. I could not live without her, even though we are so unlike, and

I know she loves me best of any one in this world; it is natural she should, for I have led her very tenderly over the rough places, and done all for her good that lay within my ample means.

"But what a beautiful spray of roses! fluttering like a red pennon! charming!" and he gathered them tenderly across his hand and pressed them to his lips, then held them off and admired them clustering among green leaves, and dewy and deliciously fragrant; then touched them to his face gently, and letting them go, watched them toss and sway in the winds, with all the wild, glad joy of exuberant childhood.

He was soon lost in the intricate tangle of politics, when he had retired to his room and taken up the late papers.

Jennie went into her own little chamber, and sat down on the carpet beside a large, dark leather trunk, that had once been her mother's. As she opened it, a fine cloth cloak lay on top, trimmed with a heavy silk fringe, while silken tassels depended from it. The lining was of black satin, and Jennie unrolled and looked at it curiously. Then she laid out fine dresses of all kinds, some of them light, airy, gossamer robes, that looked as though made for ball dresses. From the bottom of the trunk she took out a parcel of her own baby clothes, and began examining them.

"Oh, these are too fine to be of any service to them; what could the poor children do with fine embroidered dresses, and little short sleeves, and these dainty, dainty shirts and petticoats," said she, in a whisper. "Well, I will buy some good calico and muslin, and give them money besides, to buy what they most need. It is surely kind of father to allow me plenty of money. Oh, I could hardly bear to see these dresses, that

were, many of them, made by her dear hands, worn by other, and strange children too—my own good mother, who loved me so!" and she carefully replaced the things, locked the trunk and sat down beside it. Then, opening a small rosewood box, she took out a package of letters and commenced searching them over, to select all that were her mother's.

She had the entire correspondence that had passed between her father and mother, previous to their marriage. Her father was in England at his grandparents', attending College, while her mother was in Cambridge. What a contrast in the tone of the two! Of her father's the tenor was beautiful and cold; of her mother's, the Yankee girl, it was tender, loving, graceful and confiding. Sometimes Jennie fancied she detected in the character of his letters a pride, as of ancestry, or blood, or superiority to the girl he had won for his bride. She wondered if her mother had ever observed it, or was she so blinded by love, that a charmed influence came like a mist over all, and obscured the unwelcome truth? or did distance lend enchantment, and thus only give the softened outline? Be this as it may, she had always heard that her mother's married life was a very happy one.

How her heart warmed and her lips parted into an involuntary smile, when she read in one letter, written while her father was absent in the city, at the time she was six months old, a description of herself. It ran thus:

* * * "You will be glad to hear that baby begins to coo like a happy little dove, and the 'restlessness of her pretty arms is like the spread of wings.' Her forehead is so much like yours, and when she looks up suddenly, her eyes have the same expression as yours. Her hair begins to cluster in shiny

little rings and curls about her forehead and plump white neck. Oh, she is a darling pet, and I could not survive her death if she was to be taken away. Sometimes I imagine how she would look in a coffin, with white flowers strewn about her dear little face and form, and I find myself sobbing aloud."

And she—the perfection of all that is lovely, in daughter, wife, mother and friend—was the mother of Jennie.

How much she inherited from her, this brief heart history, broken and crude, but truthful, will show.

CHAPTER IX.

The sun went down on many a brow,
Which, full of bloom and freshness then,
Is rankling in the pest-house now,
And ne'er will feel that sun again.

MOORE

CHARLES STANTON lay in a great, bare room, cheerless enough to sicken and dishearten a healthy person, if confined in it days and nights. His nurse was an old crone, who sat by the east window, with her feet on a stool, smoking tobacco and rocking her chair by jogging her head backwards and forwards. Two bedsteads stood in the same room—the bedding had been taken off and thrown across the white palings that surrounded the yard. A stand stood beside Charles's bed, with vials on it, and the mingled smell of medicine and tobacco smoke filled the chamber. His physician was a kind man, but the disease was so prevalent that he could devote no time, save what his professional services required, with each patient.

How long the days and nights did seem to poor Charles, with no companionship but the living presence of his stolid nurse. He longed for a kind hand to arrange the bed clothes and turn and smoothe his heated pillow, and read aloud, and

be happy in making him comfortable. He was low in spirits, for within a few hours of each other, two of his friends, both young men, had died in the same room, and he had heard the rattling dead-cart stop at the gate, and saw two hardened hirelings come in and carelessly lug out the dead bodies, knocking one of them against the door casing as they went out, at which they both laughed heartily; then drove off on a trot. No tears, no farewell kiss, but trundled away as in Hood's "Pauper's Burial"—"rattling their bones over the stones." They were both poor students—one from Ohio, the other from Vermont.

While Charles lay thinking of his critical condition, and wondering what errand took his nurse into the closet so often, he heard a light step ascending the stairs; it was not the obese old physician, for his heavy tread shook the whole room—the nurse was in the closet—what little patting step could it be?

It paused at the door, as if in uncertainty—a sob fell upon his listening ear—the door slowly opened—and Mabel Hammond, his own, faithful, loving Mabel, stood before him. She sank on her knees at his bedside, weeping unrestrainedly. He drew her to his bosom and their tears mingled.

"Oh! Mabel! how dare you peril your own precious life for me?" cried he. "You will die, and I shall be your murderer. Do your father and mother know you are here?"

"I came with their full permission," said she, looking fully up into his face, "to nurse and take care of you in your illness—" and she stopped embarrassed, and looked down.

"And what else, darling?" said Charles.

"Why, mother—" and she hesitated, then whispered in his

ear, "mother consented for me to come on condition that, as your nurse, I was likewise to be your wife."

"Surely, dear Mabel, mother was right. It will prevent disgrace attaching itself to your noble conduct, in the eyes of the fastidious and prudish. I ask no other proof of your love, my Mabel, than you have already shown in coming here, giving up all worldly consideration for my sake, coming to me in this perilous hour, when contagion may strike its deadly pangs into your fair young life, and all for my sake!" and tears filled his eyes, and his voice was shaken with emotion.

"I fear nothing, Charles, now that I am beside you. Father is not afraid; he says I am fortified against this disease, and he gave me his blessing when I started."

The old nurse rose tottering from her chair, and hobbled off to the mysterious closet, and went into it.

Charles whispered something to Mabel and she replied aloud:

"Yes, to please you and mother, Charlie."

Just then a crash of broken glass and a "Gracious me!" sounded from the closet, while a stream of bad whisky came creeping out across the floor, followed immediately by the nurse, stamping her wet feet, and shaking her plashed gown, saying:

"I'm subjeck to the cramps, and when I feel 'em comin' on, I allers take a wee smack of root an' yarb bitters, mem. Gracious me! that are flask o' stuff cost me nigh on to two an' six spunts, mem, and there it's gone for all etarnity, an' I may die o' the cramps afore mornin' for all I know, mem. It's the consolinest thing for the cramps, root an' yarb bitters! Oh! deary me!" and she looked down at the puddle as wist-

fully as though she meditated some plan of gathering it up again; then she turned away, sighing, and took up her pipe, and thrusting a forefinger into the stinking bowl of it, scratched up the dregs with her nail.

"Oh! Charlie!" said Mabel, in a low tone, "how have you lived with such a nurse?"

"She is of the human species, Mabel, I believe, and that was some satisfaction, for none other could be obtained."

"I shall dismiss her to-night, with your permission, Charlie."

"Just as you please, ma belle, mine. You see I am in no condition to oppose you. I will have to submit to your orders for awhile, but not long, believe me, for the sight of your blessed face has done me more good than all the doctors and all the medicine in New York."

"Thank you, Charlie; but that is a stale compliment, for Giddy paid me the same not an hour before I left home."

"Good Giddy! it shows her to be a real discerning woman. How I wish she was with us to take the heaviest of the burden off from you."

By this time the old crone had taken the stem out of her pipe and was running a broom splint through to clean it.

"My pipe wheezes like some poor critter wot's got the azma, and my hands trimble so I can't regale it nohow. Spozin you try it, mem," and she laid it in Mabel's lap.

"Away with the foul thing!" said Mabel, rising in disgust and shaking it off from her dress.

It broke in a half dozen pieces, and the old woman sprang to her feet, crying out:

"Gracious me! but yer a tartar, mem, if that's the way ye

riverence old age and 'firmity. I've no comfort now; not a bit nor a grain left. What do ye spoze a body'll do now?" and she flashed her black eyes into Mabel's face like two shiny glass beads.

"I think, grandmother," said Mabel in a conciliating tone, "I will take your place as nurse to Mr. Stanton, and you can be discharged this evening."

"Oh! you'd be a great nuss, indeed, with yer fine dress and yer han's a shinin' with jewels. It would be fetchin' your proud ways down a leetle to go through all I've bin obleeged to, mem," said the old crone, grinning and displaying two or three jagged fragments of fangs.

Just then the jarring step of the doctor came up the stairs, shaking the walls of the old brick tenement, and jingling the vials that stood on the stand. He started and stepped back in surprise, on seeing Mabel, and bowed, touching his hat politely.

"You remember, doctor, of writing a letter for me to Mabel Hammond, of Wendall, to inform her of my illness." The doctor bowed assent. "This is Miss Hammond, doctor Loraine."

In a few minutes Mabel followed the nurse out of the chamber and dismissed her, paying her good wages for her services.

The old woman left her with blessings, saying:

"If there's any help you need, or any 'visin' 'bout what to do, or if you don't know how to nuss him keerful enuff, jest come down, jest yender, and ax me 'bout it. I live down ther," pointing her grimy hand in the direction of a livery

stable, "jest fernen Jonses barn and stable in a leetle snug-gery of a housen on the alley, all that my old man left me."

As Mabel turned away from her to silence her garrulity, the old woman whined out in a louder key, "An' it's good luck to ye, mem," and she shambled off home.

"I do congratulate you, Mr. Stanton," said the doctor, holding Charlie's hand at the very moment Mabel came to the door; but before either of them had observed her, she quietly turned and went down stairs. She knew why Charlie was receiving congratulations.

"God bless her! she's a true woman; else she would not dare, in this day of the world, to have come alone, even for the sake of her love, into this deserted place, where pestilence walketh abroad as at noonday."

The doctor was surprised to find his patient with no bad symptoms, and best of all, in lively, healthful spirits. For this he thanked Mabel.

While they were talking and making arrangements for procuring the necessary papers, and a parson's services that evening, Mabel walked through the lower rooms of the house. The family had deserted it, and gone far away into the country. One of the students who had died up stairs was boarding in the family and was taken ill below. This frightened the inmates, and when they left him lying dangerously ill up stairs, they had carried out all the beds to air, and the clothes and curtains, and gone away, leaving the doors and windows open.

Oh! it is a desolate picture, a house left because of pestilence!

Mabel stood in the parlor door, admiring a beautiful climb-

ing rose that lay clustering and fragrant all over the portico and one of the windows. Between the lattice bars, bright buds crept through and hung trembling, and clusters of full blown roses drooped within and swung in the air and shook off their pinky petals at her feet.

While she stood there, the dead-cart rattled past the gate, the body enclosed in a rough wooden box, with the cover nailed on, jostling and sliding from one side of the cart to the other; while the red faced and blear eyed driver, in a battered hat and rolled up shirt sleeves, was laboriously engaged in chewing gum enough for three cartmen.

Sick at heart, she turned away and walked into a little room that seemed from its furniture and accompaniments to be a lady's room; but pictures, books, busts, dresses and guitar were all piled into a heavy box, and a dressing table turned over it. A piano stood in one corner of the room, on which were piled band-boxes, jewelry cases, late magazines and other things that had been gathered up in a hurry. A dainty pair of slippers of white satin were rolled in a costly vail, in the bustle probably of departure, and flung on the music stool.

"She must be very beautiful," said Mabel to herself, as she held the little slippers in her hands and wondered who she was and what sweet name was hers. Then she rolled them up in a newspaper carefully and the vail in another, and laid them in the box.

"It surely would be no harm," she said, as she looked wistfully at the piano, and opening it, ran her fingers lightly over the keys, and found it in excellent tone. "I am so glad,"—

she smiled unconsciously, and, drawing up the stool, seated herself and played "Sweet Home."

With the doors and windows all open in that desolate house, how exquisitely beautiful the melody floated out! It warmed and quickened every pulse in her being; and again she played it, accompanied by her voice. How gloriously it rang out!

She had hardly touched the last mellow notes of the refrain, when a little girl, barefooted, and with long yellow elf-locks swinging about her face, came hurriedly into the room, saying:

"Please, Miss, the man at our house is dying of the pestilence, and he wants you, that he singing so sweetly, to come right to him this minute, if you please. He's carrying on now at a wonderful rate. Will ye come with me, Miss?" and she reached out and caught Mabel's dress to hurry her along.

"Where, child? up stairs?" said she, frightened, as she started to go up to Charles's room.

"No, Miss; here," and the girl drew her towards the door.

Without vail or bonnet, she followed the child's steps across the street and entered a low, brown cottage, that stood in the shade of some young locust trees. It had once been neat and tasteful, but now the gate was broken down, and the hogs from the street had come in and rooted up the green sod, and ploughed their noses in under the roots of the altheas and into the flower beds, and made cool nests in under the grape-vines.

A tall, pale woman, with her rough hair drawn straight back from her forehead and twisted up in a knot behind, was nursing a little, clutching, wee baby, holding it closer to her shrunken breast to soothe its cries, as Mabel entered. She

did not speak, but nodded her head and turned her eyes in the direction of an open bed room door, as though inviting her to enter there. Mabel hesitated.

"Why don't she come?" plained a voice fretfully from the bed room.

"Here she is, Walter," said the woman, going in with Mabel.

A boy of eighteen or twenty years lay on the low cot under the front window—a fair boy, dying away from home and mother and friends, in that close, stifed room, with its one window and nothing beautiful to look upon, nothing to be seen but the yellow walls of his chamber and a glimpse of mid-sky from his pillow.

"Sweet stranger," and he looked at her as though it did him good to see a new face, with a blooming, healthful glow, instead of yellow—yellow.

"Was you afraid to come near, sweet lady? How kind you are! I wanted to thank you for the beautiful song. Oh! it carried me back to my home among the green fields, and I lived over the pleasant evenings spent at the old home hearth, and heard my dear mother's kind voice, and sang from the same book with my sister, and gathered around the family altar at evening; and oh! I was so glad to hear that old song once more."

Mabel asked if there was anything she could do for him.

"Nothing, lady. I am tortured with pain; but the rest is near. I had hoped to die at home among my friends, and had a letter sent to them when I was first taken ill, begging of them to come in the old easy family carriage and take me home. But it may be the friend directed the letter wrong.

My disease is of the lungs. Farm work was too laborious, and I came here to attend school. But a life of moderate exercise would have been better for my health. I have been failing ever since I took up study. Oh! it does me good to see your face. I have not seen any person save the doctor and this family for a long time. Did I ever see you before?"

Mabel told him the circumstance that brought her to Clare monte, and that if it pleased him she would call over often and sit with him. She again asked him to think if there was not some favor she could render to make him more comfortable. He turned his head away as though pained at the words, and his face flushed, while the tears gathered in his eyes. "No, nothing," he replied in a husky voice. Her womanly intuitiveness saw at a glance that he was needy for many of the little luxuries that the sick one craves, and she resolved that he should be gratified without feeling indebted to her generosity.

With a promise to call again that evening, she left the room and beckoned to the poor woman to come with her. At the door she kindly inquired into her circumstances, and learned that within a fortnight her husband had died of small pox, and that the young man, a boarder, was poor. The poor woman preferred staying and taking care of him, to leaving him as many others had left their sick and gone into the country. She said she had nothing to live for, and only hoped the pestilence would carry off herself and children too, for she felt that she had nothing to live for, now that he was gone.

Mabel gave a few dollars to the woman, and asked her to lay it out for such things as they needed most.

The poor yellow face brightened up as she called Kitty to

run over to the grocery on the corner, and buy an orange for Walter, as he had been wishing for one all day.

Mabel ran across the street, and hurried up to Charlie's room. She found him propped up in bed, looking clean and neat; while his mustache and hair gave evident proof that the doctor had been acting in the capacity of barber.

"How well you do look, dear Charlie," said Mabel, as she came in and took a seat in the chair by his bedside.

"Oh! our bridal must not be a gloomy one, Mabel, and I am happy, now you are here and looking so well and seemingly so contented. Doctor thinks I will be about in a few days. How sweet that old song sounded in this lonely house! The doctor was delighted with it, and went down to see you play; but he said you was crossing the street over to the little brown cottage. What led you there, ma belle?"

She told him all; and he said her coming was like a double blessing in that unfortunate place, and he would join her in all she proposed doing, so far as he was able.

"To-night, Mabel, the doctor will bring a parson, and then we will never be separated again; but such a gloomy wedding ought not to have been. It should have been consummated in your own pleasant home, surrounded by your friends; and yet," he continued, "you will be far dearer to me for this trying ordeal."

Mabel kissed his white forehead, and then rose and began to make the room neat and clean. She swept, dusted and arranged the few articles of furniture, wheeled a lounge out from a back room, and soon had everything wearing a cheerful aspect. She gathered some flowers and placed a vase of them on the stand and another on the mantle. She then went

down stairs and took from her trunk a white dress, and when she came back fresh and bright, and dressed in bridal white, with her hair beautifully arranged, she looked indeed a bride.

In the evening Dr. Loraine came, a white vest conspicuous. He laughed when he came in, saying he had at last obtained a parson from the country, who came very reluctantly, tempted by the promise of an ample fee, and on condition that he need not enter the sick room.

When Charlie was propped up in bed, and Mabel standing beside him, the doctor went to the front window and whistled the signal for the parson. A dapper little man, bowing obsequiously, came to the head of the stairs and stopped. He held a bottle of ammonia or camphor, or some preventive, to his flaring little nostrils, which he occasionally snuffed as he proceeded with the ceremony.

"Do you, Charles Stanton—sniff—take this woman—sniff—Mabel Hammond, to be your—sniff, sniff—wedded wife," and so on until he came to man and wife—sniff.

At the close of the brief ceremony, doctor Loraine burst into a hearty laugh, that made the whole house ring. Charles whispered to him to look in his trunk and find money to pay the fee. The doctor mischievously took up a pair of tongs that lay on the stove, and gave the money to the parson with them, standing off as far as he could, making the parson lean away forward to reach it. He took the joke to be serious and well-meant, and laying the bill in his handkerchief without touching his hand to it, bowed and hurried away, smelling the preventive, as vigorously as though his life, hanging by a single hair, depended on it.

There was much merriment after his hurried steps had

reached the street, and he, with Gilpin speed, had galloped away with the bottle to his nose.

The best qualities, that had always lain, like valuable nuggets of gold, deep down in the mine of Mabel's womanly heart, had been brought to the surface, dug out, as it were, by the stern experiences that had been hers within a week. It had been to her like reading a new book, whose lids were two Sabbaths. So, only by hard experience, is the gold of our hearts brought forth, and tried and cleansed and made pure gold, unalloyed by worthless dross.

"Will you spend the evening with us, doctor, in a pleasant homely way?" said Mabel, cheerfully.

"I shall be very happy to, thank you," said he, "for I am tired of my gloomy bachelor's den, and weary of visiting patients, and will enjoy a little rest; yet I must confess, madam, if I had not a great share of forgiveness in my nature I should be at enmity with you."

"Why?" she asked, puzzled at his meaning.

"For coming here and taking my patient off my hands and leaving me without the credit of having restored him to health," said he smiling.

Mabel tripped down stairs to the deserted kitchen, and in a few minutes a fire was glowing in the stove, and the tea kettle puffing a column of steam. In the afternoon she had been at the baker's and over to the grocery, and bought fresh rolls, new butter, jellies, tea, cheese and dried venison. In less than an hour the sick room wore a real home look. A table, spread with a white cloth, was placed near the bed; Charles, propped up and leaning on one elbow, occupied one side, the obese, fun-loving old doctor, the other, and Mabel and the

hissing tea urn filled the end. Charlie was not permitted to sup as heartily as his returning appetite demanded, but the good doctor did ample justice to Mabel's first supper.

"My Mabel!" said Charlie fondly, as he lay back upon the pillows looking at her. The flowing lace sleeves were not becoming a hostess, doing the honors of the table, and she had turned them up, leaving her arms bare from above the elbows.

She was happy; and the warm glow of her beautiful face was radiant with the perfect peace that filled her soul.

"And now," said she, when they had supped, "I will go over and see my other patient;" and she took the tea urn in one hand, and laid two of the cool, moist rolls on a salver with a plenteous supply of all that was on the table, which she took on her arm and went across the street to the little brown cottage. In a moment more, and a light glimmered at the window by the invalid's bed side, and Mabel slid a chair under his back and raised him up on pillows very carefully.

Poor Walter! his nurse had gone to bed with her children, and there he lay alone, with his eyes gazing sorrowfully up at the patch of starry sky, in mid-heaven, seen from his window.

Mabel wet a cloth in cold water and bathed his hands and face, and pushed back his hair, and unbuttoned his collar, and gently rubbed his poor neck and shoulders.

Oh, how he revived under the touch of the cool water; and with what intense relish did he sip his tea and eat the nicely buttered roll. The thinly shaved venison tasted so good to him, and he looked up into Mabel's face, saying: "Am I dreaming or are you real? This is the way mother cared for me when I was sick at home. Oh, mother! mother!" and he cried aloud as he dropped his hands on the coverlet.

"Shall I not write to her, Walter?" said Mabel, pityingly.

"Not until after I am dead," was his reply, as he wiped away his tears; and then he took the cup and drank off the stimulating draught. "She could not have time to get here now; but, after I am gone, I wish you would write and tell her all about me, only don't tell that I suffered any pain, or wished for anything that I did not have. It would break her poor heart to know that."

Long and earnestly did Walter talk of his home and mother, of his joy that rest was so near, and of his hope in heaven.

"I wish you to see that all my books and clothes are packed safely in my trunk, and kept until my friends come for them. There is a woody knoll two or three miles east of this, lying on the Herkimer road, on which is a small burying ground. I had rather lie there than in the low swampy lot, destitute of tree or shrub, in which so many have lately been buried. Is it too much trouble?" and he looked inquiringly into Mabel's face.

"I shall be glad to do as you wish, Walter, but is there no hope of your recovery?"

"None; my two sisters died of the same disease, hemorrhage of the lungs. I have not had a violent attack for a fortnight, but I anticipate it momentarily. I feel better to-night than usual. I feel stronger, and my mind clearer, and the rest of heaven seems very near. Before I sleep to-night, if sleep comes at all, let me hear you sing and play 'Home, sweet Home.' I will sit here, by the open window, in my bed. Come and see me in the early morning, and now, good night, my sweet friend."

She left him raised up in his little cot, with pillows under

his back and head, his large eyes soft and dreamy, and sweet peace gleaming out in a smile that played on his lips and reflected on his forehead.

Mabel flung open the closed shutters and raised the window by the piano, touching the keys gently to the air of Sweet Home. Very lightly she touched them—Charlie could not have heard the soft sweep of her fingers, so like a mere breathing was the faint melody that followed after; but Walter heard it distinctly, as did Jessie of Lucknow, the Highland sloop, on that night of anguish and night of gladness. She seated herself and sang and played several songs. At the close of each one she saw a thin little hand waving in the window by the invalid's bed.

She played that sweet old song, "All is well," accompanying it with her voice—the hand was in the window. Then the song that our old grandfathers loved to sing while sitting in easy chairs, with the white, white crown that the hand of years had let down gently upon their heads—the loved song that sounded so sweetly to us, though the voices were feeble and cracked and tremulous: "There's nothing true but Heaven." The hand fluttered at the window like a little white wing.

Then she flung all the ripe fullness of her voice into the song of "Sweet Home," and played it; and never before did a piano yield sweeter sounds. It seemed like a glorious thing of life, exultant in his own high power, and rejoicing in its strength and compass of voice. Strange—and Mabel had caught the spirit of song, and her soul was lifted above the mere sweetness of music, into an atmosphere, supernal, rari-

fied and purer; and the melody that flowed from her lips was of heaven—heavenly!

When the last verse was sung through, and she looked up to the window, the white hand lay on the sill—silent, unmoved. She repeated it slow and mournful—with the last strain the lingering spirit had flown.

With the early morning Mabel went to see Walter; the family were asleep yet, and she stole in quietly and tapped on the bed room door. There was no answer—the door was not closed, and she pushed it open and entered.

The rest from pain and anxiety had come at last. He looked as though sleeping sweetly; but a stain of blood was on his lips and bosom.

Mabel woke the woman and whispered the tidings. As she went down stairs, and out at the front door, an old man was hitching his horses at the post in the street.

"Is this where Walter Newell lies sick?" said he to Mabel.

"Are you Walter's father, sir?" she asked, taking his hand. He bowed assent, without taking his eyes off her face.

"Walter will never be sick anymore, father, for in heaven is no more pain and no more sickness," said Mabel, leading him up stairs.

The poor old father bowed beside the young and beautiful dead, with a smothered cry of anguish; while Mabel, closing the door, went out and sank into a chair.

When the bitterness of grief was past, she went in and soothed him, by telling him how sweetly and calmly the life-

light had gone out, and how patiently he had waited for the summons, and all she knew, save that which would have grieved him hopelessly and which was now past.

Walter was buried in the wild wood spot he had selected; Mabel and his father following as mourners in the easy carriage in which he had so longed to be carried home.

The letter that Walter had sent home had lain in the office a fortnight, owing to the stupidity of Mr. Coulter, the postmaster, who still averred that there was no letter for the family. When he heard that Mr. Newell was going to visit Walter at Claremonte, he said he believed there was a letter for them in the office, mailed from that place.

A few hours too late! Oh, what long years of remorseful agony did that careless official bring down upon the poor, unhappy family! A few hours too late! Oh, that it had been otherwise! But, oh! how many feel, that

"Of all sad words of tongue or pen,
The saddest are these: *it might have been!*"

Tombstones were purchased and erected. The trunk, well filled with Walter's little possession, was fastened to the carriage. Mabel wrote a long, kind letter to the mother, on whose devoted head this new sorrow was waiting to fall; and with a bowed form and an aching heart did the poor old father turn homewards again.

The soft bed in the carriage was untouched, the white pillows unpressed by the head that was pillowed in the damp, dark grave, hid away from the tearful and loving eyes of the

broken-hearted, wailing mother, who would, when the easy carriage came in sight, fly with expectant arms and ready kisses, to greet her darling boy. Alas! alas! *it might have been!*

CHAPTER X.

Does God make, she said,
All sorts of creatures, really, do you think?
Or is it that the Devil slavers them
So excellently, that we come to doubt
Who's strongest, He who makes, or He who mars?
MRS. BROWNING'S "AURORA LEIGH."

THE hot summer days have waned into cool mellow October. Fruitage, and gleaned and garnered harvests, make bounteous plenty all over the land. The woods are but little tinted with the frosts; the glossy crimson leaves of the gum, and the yellow of the maple, and the brown and yellow dots that fleck the quivering leaves of the poplar, are all that show the visits of the frost-king.

Glen Green is a very paradise of beauty, with its tall plume-like pines, its stiff, graceless, yet sombre hemlocks, its dashing waterfalls, masses of green and gray and looming rocks, and rugged steeps overhung with trailing and swinging lengths of loose vines, and its deep, dark dells, moist with trickling drops and fine spray. High walls of rock arise, smooth as a ceiled chamber, only for an occasional crevice, just large enough for a mother bird and her cunning little nest. And the mosses and lichens! why all over this high, moist, smooth expanse

of rock, one will see rare embroidery of delicate tracery, dainty enough in one place to be a pattern for a wee infant's slip, then perhaps above it a pattern in heavier work and of more elaborate finish; and in another a sample of crotchet, while perhaps just under the beetling brow of the over-looming rock, will be a specimen of braid work in bright green and golden, for a child's white flannel petticoat, or a charming design in worsted, brown and yellow and dark green, on a back ground of buff—"just the thing for pa's slippers."

Like a thread of silver does Crystal Brook wind away down through the meadows and around the swelling knolls.

Among all the homes in the Glen, from farmer Lee's stately mansion down to the widow Marshall's humble cabin, there is not a more tasteful home or a happier one than William Lisle's.

Cicely has been a wife two years. It is three since Allie's mother died. Alice is now a rosy little girl, loving her doll and kitten and play-house and books, and hunting posies in the Glen, but better than all does she love her new mother.

Cicely is arranging her heavy curls and dressing her in white to attend a little girl's pic-nic, that Grace Lee had made down by the waterfall. All the little girls are invited and they anticipate joyous times. A swing was erected among the pines, and see-saws were made along the fence and across logs, and everything was done that could contribute to the enjoyment of the little party. Cicely put a barred white muslin dress on Alice, and white drawers, so that her clothes would be suitable for a pic-nic in the woods among brush and shrubbery and the rough new fences she would have to climb. She told her to stop at Mrs. Carter's and go with Ella.

Mrs. Carter did not know that Alice was coming to go with Ella, and had designed walking down with her herself, after she had got an early dinner for the men. So Alice had to wait awhile.

Ella was a little lame and had to walk very slow. When they got down to the grove the tables were nearly set, and groups of merry children were scattered about, some on the ground and some at the swings; while the larger ones were arranging the table.

As Mrs. Carter walked down by the brook and crossed the wide plank with Alice and Ella, Grace Lee called out to the girls:

"There comes Alice, as sure as the world! I'll bet she had to cry before she got to come, or her mother wouldn't have consented. Oh! she has on a pair of drawers I've seen her wear every day, not Sunday drawers at all!"

"Hush, girls," said Mrs. Lee, who, with her hired girl, was unpacking a big basket of loaf cakes, cookies, nut and ginger cakes, "you may have a step-mother yourself some day, Grace," and her face put on a grieved and sorrowful look.

"Well, ma, I'd see if a step-mother would dress-me like a dowdy to go to a pic-nic, among nice dressed girls," said Grace, tossing her head and shrugging her bare shoulders.

"She don't get to wear her Sunday hat, either," whispered Lottie Charles, leaning over towards Grace, as she stared at Alice's gimp hat and dark green ribbons.

Alice sat down near a group of girls who were huddled together in Sunday finery, on a large shawl, spread upon the ground.

"Sit over girls," said little Mattie Loring, "and make room for Allie on the shawl."

"She don't need to sit on it," said another, scornfully, as she contrasted Alice's clothes with her own gaudy dress, and drawers, flounced and edged with delicate lace.

"Mother said if I did soil or tear this dress, it was no matter," said Allie, "it is an old one, just fit to play and romp in."

"Long sleeves don't look well at a pic-nic," said she of the gauzy dress, looking askance at Alice's long sleeves.

"Ma said it would be best, so my arms wouldn't get scratched or sunburnt," said Alice, contentedly.

"I wish mine were long too," said Mattie; "see how blue and cold my poor arms are—ugh!" and the little creature shivered as she crossed them snugly on her bosom; but there was no warmth there, among the thin lawn that draped her chilled bosom.

"Wrap my apron over them, Mattie, dear, till the sun shines round the hill warmly," said Alice, untying her little ruffled silk apron, and spreading it over the blue arms.

"Thank you, Allie Lisle; you're a dear little woman of a girl," was the grateful response.

"You Ell Carter! I'll never speak to you again, you good for nothing, dirty jade, you," said Sarah Bell, the girl in the gauzy dress, as Ella Carter, in raising up to fix down the corner of the shawl, set her knee on the lace flounce of Sarah's dress and tore it badly. "It was my Sunday dress, the best one I have, and now look at it! What *will* my mother say? She'll whip me, I know she will, and I aint a bit to blame for it."

"I'll step in as I go home past there, and tell her how it happened," said Ella, looking frightened. "Oh! I'm so sorry, Sarah; it lops down like a hog's ear now, and looks ugly enough," she said, in her simplicity, looking at the rent, and where the flounce was ripped off and hanging down.

The quaint expression made the girls laugh, which maddened Sarah.

"I'll learn you to compare my best dress to a hog's ear!" the spoiled beauty screamed, springing like a tiger at the offending child, and striking her on the head, right and left.

The girls interfered and led Sarah away.

"It's wicked to strike any one, Sarah," said Alice, laying her hand gently on the arm of the passionate girl.

"Not if they deserve it, like she did," said Sarah.

"But mother says we ought to kiss everybody that strikes us; she says the Bible says so."

"You give your mother as very great authority—nobody but old Prue Marshall's daughter. She used to work out for her living, and your father married her because nobody else wanted her," said the pet, drawing herself up proudly and looking down at Alice.

"Well, I love her," said Alice, in a broken voice, showing that the words had their effect.

"Well, I love our old Brave, too, because he loves me, and won't let anybody hurt me," said Sarah, laughing coolly and sarcastically.

Some of the girls laughed at this, and Alice, with her eyes brimming over with tears, slid her arm gently away from Sarah's waist and turned off in another direction.

"Poor, lone child!" said Mrs Lee, as she saw her sitting

by herself among the low feathery pines, gathering the brown cones in her lap and dropping them down into the narrow cleft in the rocks at her feet. "I expect she is kept under so at home that she has no pleasure like other little girls, when she goes abroad."

"I have always thought she is just as well provided for now, since Cicely is her mother, as she was when Mrs. Lisle was alive," said Mrs. Carter.

"Oh my! her mother never would have permitted her to attend such a party as this is in such common clothes," said Mrs. Lee.

"Well now, Mrs. Lee, I must beg leave to differ with you. I think Cicely has shown better judgment in the way she has dressed Alice to-day, than any of us mothers. Neither rain, mud or rents are going to spoil Alice's clothes. Look at Sarah Bell, with her ruined flounce; her pleasure is all gone for to-day, and her mother will be angry or sorry, when Sarah goes home to-night. She is sure of getting punished for an accident, and that lies with weight on her mind. Poor girl! she cannot keep the tears back whenever she looks down at her dress. There's May Willis has lost the beautiful wreath off her hat, and *her* heart will ache all day. A pity she had not worn her plain coarse one, as Alice did. My poor little lame Ella will feel bad all the time from the cuffing she got awhile ago, and on the whole, Mrs. Lee, if we look with unprejudiced eyes upon Cicely Lisle, we will call her a model step-mother. I fear none of us stand as fair in God's sight as *she* does. She is training up Alice in an honest, sensible, religious way."

"If I'd been in her place, I could not have received Alice from a dying mother in the manner she did. It looked just

as though she expected Mr. Lisle to marry her, and as though he was bound in honor to do it; it looks so to me anyhow."

"It don't seem so to me," said Mrs. Carter meekly.

"Because you are not discerning. Now *I* could see from the very first how it was to terminate. And they do say," she said, lowering her voice, for a group of girls and little children stood around listening, "that Cicely hung around there a good deal before Mrs. Lisle died, and that Lisle and her had a considerable of private conversation together. I don't say this *is* so, but a certain individual told me that a certain woman told him, who was knowing to it—I only give it for what it's worth—people will talk, you know."

"I was not there much—it was while Mr. Carter lay sick, and I had to be at home all the time; but nothing you can say will make me think any the less of Cicely Lisle, for I am aware there is all over the world a very strong prejudice against step-mothers. For my part, I love them dearly, every one of them. They are a self-sacrificing class of women.

"Yes, I presume so. Now Mrs. Lisle used to spin for Lee's mother, when she was quite young—seventy-five cents a week, and eat breakfast and sleep at home. I never was in her house but once, and then I went of an arrant; her associates was not mine, and I didn't care about breaking over the rules of society."

"The tables are ready, mother," said Grace, coming up. Groups of little girls ran, leaving the see-saws and swings and play-houses.

"Where's Alice Lisle?" said Mrs. Lee. "Oh, there, under the pines;" and she went off to bring her.

"Come, Allie, dinner's ready," said she, taking her hand in

hers; then, observing that she had been weeping, she said, "don't you enjoy the party, Alice?"

"Yes ma'am."

"Wasn't your mother willing for you to come to-day?"

"Oh yes, ma'am."

"You didn't want to wear this dress, did you?"

"Oh, yes! mother said it was best, and I think so too. Don't you?"

"It does very well, child, but did you know this was Gracie's eleventh birthday?"

"Yes ma'am."

The cunning train of questions, promptly and truthfully answered, did not satisfy the crafty woman as to the cause of Alice's red eyes and tear-stained cheeks, so she tried another, and a nearer way.

"Do you love this mother as well as the one that is dead?"

"Yes ma'am;" and the voice faltered and the lip trembled.

"Why have you been crying, then, my dear?" and she spoke very softly.

"Oh, ma'am, I cried because I felt so bad and sorry, about the girls telling me—" the quivering voice stopped, broke out into sobs, and tears streamed down the little face.

Mrs. Lee had a touch of the mother-nature, down deep in her heart somewhere, and now she repented that she had pressed the child with questions.

When they came up to the table, all the little girls gathered around Alice, saying: "What's the matter?" "don't cry, Allie;" "there's a good girl;" and, "oh, you shall have the nicest cake on the table, sissy," said Grace, smoothing her hair and toying with the long, sun-shiny curls.

Alice could not restrain her tears, and leaning against good auntie Carter's bosom, she cried aloud.

"Hush, dear, and let's go to dinner," said Mrs. Lee, "and I give you this to do as you please with; you may keep it forever, if you like;" and she laid a beautiful, large birthday cake in Allie's lap.

"Oh, I do thank you," said the child, sobbing and looking at the cake, "you are so good, auntie Lee." Mrs. Carter took it and laid it in her own basket for her.

"Now I will go down to the fountain and wash you all sweet and clean, honey;" and she led Alice away, talking cheerfully to her all the time about her nice cake.

"What did ail her?" asked the girls of Mrs. Lee, when Alice was out of sight.

"Oh, the poor little thing has no mother, you know, and I s'pose she is kept in so close at home that she don't know how to behave herself when she goes out. Oh, my! a child that has no mother is to be pitied, pitied."

"What a life is before her; she'd better be dead," said Lottie Charles to Grace.

"Oh, yes," was the plaintive answer; "I wish there had never been a stepmother born into the world."

In a moment Mrs. Carter returned and placed Alice beside little Ella, at the table.

They were a happy company and did honor to the repast. As Mrs. Lee came around serving those at that end of the table, Alice looked up and said, "Mrs. Lee, I do so thank you for that nice cake."

"What will you do with it?" said some of the little girls.

"Why take it home to dear mother, you might know," said Alice, laughing in her joy.

Grace curled her lip as she looked over to her mother.

Mrs. Lee was a sort of kind hearted, hospitable woman, ready to help the needy if she could do it, and the fact be known; and yet she was not a good woman, and it made Mrs. Carter's heart ache as she looked up triumphantly and with a sidelong glance, into Mrs. Lee's face, to see the effect of Alice's loving answer, and beheld malignity and hatred marring that countenance.

Mrs. Lee did not love the true and good and beautiful. Strange that any woman should best love gossip and tattle, and to keep a continual strife in neighboring families, and joy in speaking lightly of a good deed; ready to malign good motives, and to insinuate unwelcome truths—and—untruths too. Such a woman was Mrs. Lee, and such women, upas-like—God pity and forgive them all—are in every neighborhood, all over the world; poisonous and unclean. Their very presence is malarious, and should be dreaded and shunned.

When dinner was over, the children all returned to their plays. Mirth and ringing laughter resounded among the hills, and rang in mimic echoes down in the grotto, and in the cool recesses of the Glen.

"Why what is this? it looks like a grave;" said Alice, as she sprang over the fence that separated the dark pine woods from an old clover field, and there, just before her, was a long, green grave, covered with pinks and thyme, and myrtle and moss, looking as though a loving hand was often there, and as though the silent dead lived on, in one heart, at least.

"Whose can it be, I wonder?" said Alice to her playmate, Ella Carter.

"I heard mother say," said Ella, "that long ago a poor schoolmaster came from Vermont, and a little while after his school was out he got sick and had no money to pay people for taking care of him; and then he got to be a pauper, and the folks hired an old woman to nurse him, and he died there; and they buried him up here because he used to love these hills so well."

"Poor man!" said Alice, laying her hand on the grave caressingly, "if we'd been bigger we would have taken care of him, wouldn't we, Ella?"

"Yes, indeed we would, Ally, and we wouldn't have had him buried here alone—we'd put him in the graveyard, 'side of your mother, or my father."

"If he loved these woods so when he was alive, the grave ought to have been under the big pine, beside the brook, where the tassels sweep and trail on the ground—that place always makes me think of death, and waving hearse-plumes, and weeping willows, and long mourning-vails; don't it you too, Ella?"

"Yes," was the reply, "and mother says no one ever found out who it is that keeps this grave looking so nice; some folks have seen a woman here after night, fixing it, but they never got to see her face, because she wears a heavy veil."

"There ought to be a stone up here. I should think if his scholars loved him they would have put one up long ago," said Alice. "When we both get to be young women, like Mabel Hammond, and rich, let us buy one."

"Well—but what would we put on it? Oh, I know now;"

and the little lame girl's face grew very beautiful, and the slumbering spirit of poesy awoke, as a rosy babe stretching and waking out of its sleep, and the child said, "Just this: *The pauper's grave.*"

"Oh, Ella, dear, that is pretty! but it sounds as though he wasn't as good as other people, or as though there was something that made him below us, or unworthy some way; I can't tell you just what I do mean, but you understand me, don't you?"

"Yes," said Ella, "I know what you mean; you are like me, sorry and ashamed that there is such a word as *pauper*, or such a person in the world as a pauper; for such things should not be. I believe it would sound best to have just the word, 'our dear teacher,' on it."

"Yes, that would be pretty, but it would be giving his ungrateful scholars the honor, and they don't deserve it. If we had been his pupils, then it would be suitable. Let's think of something else. '*The poor stranger*,' would sound pretty, or, '*the unloved*.'"

"Yes, but they send such a pain to one's heart," said Ella. "'*The stranger's grave*,' would sound appropriate, because it is not among other graves, and he was a stranger among us. It would be pointing out the spot the same as we say, the Dell, the Grotto, the Fountain, the Glen."

"That is the inscription we will have," said Alice; "it is the best one we could have thought of;" and the two girls resumed their see-sawing across the fence.

They had not played long until Mattie Loring came up to them, with the lace edging hanging in a string from her drawers; she had caught it on a bush while swinging, and tore it off.

"I'm sorry," said she, "but my mother won't whip me; she ain't one of that kind of mothers. She never whips me for any accident that I cannot help. I expect if I'd tear all this beautiful vine of embroidery off my skirt, she would only say she was sorry I had been so unfortunate."

"Oh," said Alice, with big wild eyes, "if I'd happen to get every stitch tore off me, but my chemise, my mother wouldn't whip me when I'd go home."

"Why, Alice, I heard some of the girls say to-day that your ma was real cross to you, and you'd better be dead than have a stepmother," said Mattie.

"Why, it's not so bad to have one's mother dead, as folks think it is. Mother is just as good to me, and asks God to love and take care of me and make me a good woman; and she never does anything wrong or wicked at all."

"I wish girls would mind their own business then, and not talk about your good mother so. Now, my mother never prays, and she says it's no use for little girls to say, 'Now I lay me down to sleep,' for God will take care of 'em anyhow; but I guess we'd ought to ask, for that shows Him we think about Him, and want Him to take real care of us," said Mattie, gesticulating earnestly with her head.

Wiser heads might well have hung in shame upon the broad breasts below, had they heard these little girls in their conversation. Babes and sucklings whose words were as strong meat for strong men.

Not until the shades of evening began to gather, and the slanting sun rays fall goldenly upon the hill tops, did the merry party turn their lingering steps homewards.

In packing up the dishes, Grace had lost one of her

mother's silver forks, and the broad red hand of the angry woman fell smartly upon the bare shoulders of the poor girl, who shrieked and darted out of the way.

"The little pest! It is too bad, after all the trouble I have had in making her a birth-day party, to lose one of my choice silver forks! I did work and manage so hard to get them forks, for I always felt as if I had nothing nice enough to set before company, until I got them silver forks. I'll see now where that new pink barege is to come from, wont I Miss Careless?"

Grace cried aloud, for the pink barege was a coveted and long waited-for object.

"One of my nice silver forks with an ivory handle, fit to set before a queen," said the distressed woman, stirring up the leaves with her feet, and searching intently, talking away all the while. "All I ever asked for in this world, was an out-an-out set of white china, with gold bands, and a set of silver knives and forks; and after long years of toil and trouble and vexation and coaxing of Lee, I worried a set out of him; and now one of my beautiful forks is lost! I'd rather lost anything else in the world; I don't see how I can stand it. That careless, impident hussy, I can't put a bit of confidence in her any more; for if she wouldn't care for a silver fork with an ivory handle, what would she care for? All she wants, is to be dressed up nice, and go gadding about, showing off her finery; and the Lord knows it ain't bought with a mere song." And there the poor woman shuffled among the leaves, and fretted and talked, as any real woman would have scorned to talk, making herself unhappy, spoiling her children, humbling and mortifying poor Grace, and worst of

all, tarnishing and soiling her own soul, dragging it down to petty trifles, and making it forget all the good resolves that in her better moments beautified and elevated her mind.

We believe that all persons, the thief, liar, murderer, seducer, and the unprincipled one who is swayed about by the breeze of popular favor, all have moments of retrospection in which with broken and contrite hearts they renew their vows to the All-Good, and resolve and re-resolve to cast away all known sins, and stand up bravely for the right, and make their aim the highest and best in the reach of mortal man on earth. God help them! In these precious moments we hope and pray that the long stride they take heaven-ward stands firm and secure, and that, when, like ropes of sand, these resolves are broken, with the morning light perhaps, *that the step higher is there still*. God grant it in pity for the weak and the erring.

"Dear mother! I am so glad of this beautiful cake, to take home to her. I must take one more good look at it," said little Alice, as she tied on her hat to start home. She lifted the white cloth carefully, as one would raise a veil from off a sleeping face, and—it was gone; the basket was empty.

"Auntie, this is your basket, aint it?" said she, on her knees beside it, holding the white towel up in her hand.

"Yes, Alice, that's my basket," said she, coming towards her.

"Where's my beautiful cake, aunt?"

"Is it gone, dear child?" asked Mrs. Carter with wonder in her eyes.

"Gone, auntie, gone!" said Alice, leaning her face down on her knees, and crying aloud.

"But what is this? Why, if it ain't Mrs. Lee's fork, sure

enough," said Mrs. Carter, as the fork dropped out of the towel Alice had held up in her hand. "It's got in there by mistake, I expect," said Mrs. Carter, as Mrs. Lee came up the hill with a light, springing step, and snatching the fork, laughed outright in her gladness.

"Allie's cake is gone, and no one knows where," said Mrs. Carter.

"Well, well; it aint much of a loss—nothing compared to a real silver fork with an ivory handle," said the selfish woman in reply.

"I'm so glad the fork is found, Mrs. Lee," said Alice, looking up through bright tears, "for I felt so sorry for you."

Had any one known the truth, they would have seen a twinge of conscience flit across Mrs. Lee's face; but none knew it.

"Thank you, dear, and I'm sorry about your cake; but some of these baking days, I'll remember you, and make you a real nice, sweet one."

As Alice passed Mrs. Carter's on her return home, that good woman gave her a cake that she had baked for the picnic before she knew that it was Grace's birth-day party, and that the Lees were to find all the refreshments. So the disappointment was only of short duration, and the child's heart bounded with joy as she ran into the house and laid the cake in Cicely's lap, saying, "It's all yours, ma."

"Biddy, did you take that cake out of Mrs. Carter's basket, as I told you to do?" said Mrs. Lee to her hired girl, after they had got home.

"Indade I did, mam, as ye tould me," was the reply, "and I shouldn't wonder if it's meself that dropped the siller fork intil the basket, in me haste."

"I pitied Alice, didn't you, mother?" said Grace, "when she first missed it, for she looked as though the greatest sorrow in the world had come upon her."

"I did feel sorry for her; but I don't give her cakes to carry home to her step-mother. It did provoke me so to hear her say it was for her *dear* mother. I really believe she loves Cicely as well as if she was her own mother. I wish she hated her. I can't bear to see a second wife step in and fill another's place like she does. If the cake had been for Mr. Lisle and Alice, I would have let her kept it. It looked a little suspicious, finding the fork in that basket. The dear knows, a young child like her can be taught most anything. You think you did drop it in for certain, do you, Bridget?"

"Indade I didn't see meself do it, mam, and I aint commonly very tricky, but I thought as how I might o' done the likes of it. A body can't allers see what ther han's is a doing. It might have been sticking in my bosom you know, and dropped out as I leant over the basket. I verry often stick things of vally in my bosom—sometimes money or nutmegs, or bits of silk or caliker, or a little handful of dried peaches, and may be now, I'd stuck a fork in there, bein' they're siller; a body's bosom is such a safe place you know."

"She seems like an honest, loving child, but kept under too much at home, I should judge by her actions and looks and clothes. Oh, dear! anything but a step-mother for me!" and Mrs. Lee hurried and set the supper table for the men.

CHAPTER. XL

What thine hand
Can do for others' good, do with the might
Of woman's tenderness.

Mrs. SIGOURNEY.

FOR more than an hour had Jennie Howland sat alone in her chamber, her shawl and hood lying on a chair beside her, and a large parcel tied with a cord, lay on the table by the candle.

"I do wish father would hurry and go to bed; it is quite ten o'clock now," and she drew a small gold repeater from her bosom, and returning it, sat down and took up the first book that came in the way of her hand. It was her mother's Bible, and she opened at the book of Psalms and read aloud:

"My soul cleaveth unto the dust; quicken thou me according to thy word. I have declared my ways and thou heardest me: teach me thy statutes. Make me to understand the way of thy precepts, so shall I talk of thy wondrous works. My soul melteth for heaviness; strengthen thou me according to thy word. Remove from me the way of lying, and grant me thy law graciously. I have chosen the way of truth; thy judgments have I laid before me. I will run the way of thy commandments when thou shalt enlarge my heart."

To Jennie's shame and grief, her father had refused to take back the lame horse from the poor man, and utterly refused to lose even half the value of him. She dared not interfere lest she should rouse her father's anger against her, but she resolved that in the end, the poor man should not be the loser.

The parcel contained material for winter clothing, soft woolen yarn, flannel, muslin, gingham for aprons, cloth, caps, hoods, mittens and spelling books. As soon as she heard her father lock the parlor and bed room doors, she stole slyly down by the back way, and gathering her shawl closer about her, for the night winds were autumnal and chilly, she set out on her walk. It was a mile and a half across level fields, and though lack of physical labor had made her unfit for the undertaking, she felt strong in the blessed consciousness of doing good. Her step was as light and springy as any buxom country girl's, who had always been accustomed to run across broad fields and meadows.

When she arrived at the tenant's cabin, in which Mr. Armstrong lived, she observed the light burned very dimly. Her intention was to lay the parcel on the door sill, and return immediately, knowing they would surely find it in the early morning; but a voice of one reading the Scriptures fell upon her ear. She listened; strong, manly tones were reading the twelfth chapter of St. Luke:

"And he said unto them, take heed and beware of covetousness, for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

He read on, and she laid down the parcel in the door, and walked around the house to a small back window which was

curtained with morning-glory vines. The picture within that met her gaze never, never was obliterated in life.

The mother sat in the corner nursing her babe. Its little, loose night gown was narrow and scant, but white as snow; and its plump, little feet just peeped out from below the hem, and were turned next to the fire. A low cot behind the door held three children, while two little girls, with smooth braids of hair, and folded hands, sat between their father and mother, very quietly listening to him read. They were poorly but cleanly clad. No light burned in the house save a fire made of sticks and chips, which gave out a flickering, unsteady blaze.

After the chapter was concluded, they all knelt in prayer. The mother bowed her head over her sleeping babe, until her lips rested upon its pure brow. Such a feeling prayer, so simply worded, and showing such trust and faith in God, Jennie had never heard before.

She knelt, too, for when the poor man said "let us pray," she felt herself unconsciously kneeling before she was aware of it. The blue sky, full of shimmering stars, was above her, the cool night winds and the falling leaves around her, the pleading of the rich poor man, whose wealth was all in heavenly treasure, out of the reach of moth and rust and thieves, and griping, soulless landlords. His prayer had borne her above all earthly ills and disappointments. She felt that God was with her, and that His approving eye was looking down upon her. With a happier heart than had beat in her bosom for many a day, did she quietly steal away from the little window at the close of the prayer, and wend her steps homeward.

She had only gone a few rods from the house, when the door opened, and a call of, "Oh! father, come here," was distinctly heard. Then as long as she was in sight, did the door stand open. Perhaps, in their joy of looking over the contents of the parcel, they had forgotten to shut it.

And the giver? There was no clue by which they could learn where the package came from—only a slip of paper inside contained these words: "I have never seen the righteous forsaken."

Sweetly did Jennie sleep that night, never waking until the girl rapped on her door to tell her breakfast was waiting. Her walk had been so like healthful labor, that instead of being tired, she had never felt more vigorous and happy.

"How you do eat this morning, Jane! One would think you worked at grubbing or making rails, to see you eat sweet potatoes, and toast, and steak, and sip your coffee with such infinite relish," said her father.

Jennie laughed heartily; but he never smiled, as he continued:

"I can't bear to see a woman eat heartily, especially of strong victuals. Before I met your mother, Jane, I was betrothed to a beautiful and intellectual lady; but she grew absolutely repulsive to me, because of her eating boiled pork, and beans, and sausage, and stewed onions, and drinking strong coffee without cream or sugar. She could sit and eat of such victuals and converse beautifully, and quote from the old poets, while at the same time her mouth would be full of potatoes and pork, and her rosy, ripe lips glistening with gravy. I felt my honor was at stake, but I could not love her. Sometimes she would be so engaged with a juicy bit of

beefsteak, that the eloquent words would grow fewer and farther between, and she would cease conversation; or she would make a long pause while she would be preparing her salad, or trying if her eggs had been overboiled. One day I called in, and trusting to my intimate acquaintance, and rather out of curiosity, too, I started to go in at the dining room door. The window was raised, and there stood my charmer, eating mince meat with a large spoon. I never saw her again. I sent her a note, releasing her from the engagement, on the ground of incompatibility of tastes."

"Why, father, you martyr-hero! What troubles you have seen, and how nobly and manfully you have combated them!" laughed Jennie.

"Why, I think the enjoyment of food is a rational enjoyment, one that does us great good, too, and that, in the same ratio that intelligent persons enjoy food, so do they appreciate intellectual attainments, and morality, and goodness, and justice, in their highest sense."

"Oh! yes; I presume it is all well enough as it is; but what a pity people were not more alike in all their aims and desires, and tastes; then all humanity would be as a great harp sweetly toned, and all the chords in perfect harmony. What a glorious anthem of praise would rise up to heaven!" and with his hands folded behind him, the poor misanthrope paced back and forth across the room.

Oh! he was starving his hungry soul in trying to feed it on the mere milk and water of ideality, trying to live out the dreamy life he had painted in his listless moods, holding it up before his child, and turning it so the sunshine would fall broadest and brightest upon it.

That afternoon Metta and Laura Whitfield were riding out on horseback, and called on Jennie. They looked very pretty in their riding dresses and velvet basques and jetty plumes, drooping from their hats quite down to their shoulders.

"Cousin Nell wrote to ma from New York that it was very fashionable in the city for the ladies to ride out every afternoon, and we gave pa no rest, until he consented to let us ride, too; but I assure you it is very fatiguing," said Metta, as she languidly leaned her head on one side.

"Is my hat becoming my complexion, Jen?" said Laura, as she turned herself round before the glass, admiring the sweeping feather, as a peacock admires his tail.

"I am not a good judge, Laura," said Jennie, as the moon-faced girl stood before her, seeking a compliment; while she could have laughed aloud at the extreme breadth of face the fashionable hat entailed upon the wearer.

"Lot, did you see those young men at Myres's saloon, when we passed? They stared as though they had never seen young ladies riding on horseback before," said Metta, as she fitted her gauntlet gloves tighter on her fingers.

"Yes; and I thought how romantic it would be, if my horse would frighten at the flutter of my plume, and plunge, and rear, and throw me off on the pavement by the saloon, and that young foreign Count, de Riviere, would lift me up, fainting in his arms, and carry me in, and thus be my rescuer, my benefactor," said the silly girl.

"Romantic, certainly," said Jennie, laughing.

"Which was the Count, Lot?" said Metta, lisping.

"The young gentleman in lemon kids, with curls clustering

about his pretty white forehead, and a large bosom pin, in imitation of a star."

"I guess I didn't see him; I felt that I was the observed of all observers, and was particularly anxious to sit gracefully, and as though I rode with perfect ease; but my foot had slipped out of the stirrup, and it would have hung down too low, if I hadn't watched all the time. Still I think I acquitted myself with honor."

"Oh! did you see Kate Barnes peeping out of the window? She did look as though she would bite us, through very envy. She would like so well to be the leader of our set; but you know that her father couldn't afford a horse for her to ride. I do hate to see people sticking themselves up for something that is out of their reach. She teaches embroidery to the little girls in town because she is really obliged to do it; but she always says she does it to please them, and make them pass away their time pleasantly," said Laura, a scornful expression sitting about her mouth.

"Do come down and see us, Jennie," said Metta; "you stay at home so closely you will get to be as gloomy as these dreary old woodlands; and when you get to looking that way, I will cut your acquaintance. You'd ought to ride out, too; I know uncle Howland would be glad to furnish you with the best horse he owns, and dress you up in a fashionable riding habit like ours."

"I know father would be pleased to gratify me, if I wished to ride," said Jennie.

"Oh!" said Laura, "I had a letter from James Hamilton, last week; and he inquired particularly about you, and wished to know if any gentleman was paying his addresses to

you. Mother said she could see no reason why he should inquire after you, and that when I wrote back, I should tell him Count de Riviere was your suitor; and I mean to do it, Jen."

"Oh! no; that would not be the truth," said Jennie, blushing painfully, and trying to hide her embarrassment.

"Well, may be I won't," said Laura, looking strangely into Jennie's face.

They mounted awkwardly into their saddles, and rode away, jolting and bobbing about on their horses in anything but a graceful or easy manner.

Jennie sat alone, communing with her own troubled thoughts, after the girls were gone. "Oh!" she whispered, "does he ever think of me? does he care for me? If he only loved me it would be all I would ask in this world. He is so good, and so noble, and superior to all others. Why should he make that inquiry in Laura's letter unless he felt a more than mere friendly interest in me? How I wish he would write to me! Oh! it seems as if my life was to be unhappy, for I am surrounded with troubles." There she sat, with her fingers locked together, and the tears unconsciously stealing down her cheeks, her lips moving, as she whispered to herself. Then suddenly recollecting, she rose, saying, "We make a great deal of our own unhappiness. God will do what is best;" and she walked out to where Mina, the hired girl, was drawing the red coals out of the oven, and asked if she could assist her in any way.

"Yes, Miss Jennie; my oven is ready and waiting, just hot enough; and all the pies and cakes are in on the table. I must hurry and get them in soon."

Jennie ran in and helped her carry them out, and put them

in to bake. While Mina pulled some leaves and stuffed in the cracks about the oven door, Jennie got a pail of water and quenched the glowing heap of coals.

"What baby, I wonder, is to eat this pretty little flowered pie, you are baking on the patty pan, Mina?" said Jennie.

"The widow Lane's little Ermina fell from a pear tree, and broke her arm—she's named for me, Miss—and the pie is for her," said the girl.

"Where do they live, Mina?" asked Jennie.

"They just moved the first of September, into that little house down there in the edge of Squire Martin's meadow."

"I wish you'd let me carry it down and say you sent it. I feel as if I'd like to walk out."

"Lord love the girl! you may do it in welcome," said Mina, her brown eyes all a-sparkle with delight.

"Don't tell father, or say anything about it before him," said Jennie.

"She's worth her weight in solid gold," thought the girl, as she entered the kitchen and began scraping her bread bowl, and washing the table, and preparing some fruit for tea.

Jennie took the pie and a bowl of honey, and walked across the fields to Mrs. Lane's.

Mrs. Lane was a woman about forty-five years of age, and had once been in better circumstances. Her demeanor showed that she possessed a cultivated mind, and had mingled much in society. A mutual feeling of friendship drew the poor woman and Jennie together; and in the twilight, when they parted, it was with as tender a "good night" as though they were old friends.

As Jennie walked along under the elms that beautified the

farm of her father, she thought she heard steps, and paused to listen; but no sound fell upon her ear, save the hooting of the owl, and the lonesome chirping of the crickets under the brown heaps of waste clover. But she had not walked far, until her father came suddenly up behind her, and laying his hand roughly on her shoulder, said, in a voice husky with rage:

"You was down at yon mud cabin, paying a call, was you? Is that the way you repay me for all I have sacrificed for your sake? It is born in you to be low and mean, and seek low companionship. You thought you'd deceive me; but I heard you and Mina talking and laying your plans."

"Father," said she, trembling and laying her hand on his arm, "I have done nothing to be ashamed of. They are honest poor people; the little child is sick; and I only carried a pie and a bowl of honey over to it—they are in need. Was that wrong or mean?"

"It *was* wrong. I don't value what you gave; but I am provoked that you should seek to deceive me; and worst of all, I do grieve that you will mingle in such low society. I had hoped much, too much of you," and here his voice grew softer, "for I have no son to bear the illustrious name of Howland, and hand it down full of honors to posterity; all my hopes are centered in you. Can you, will you try to fulfill them, Jane? or will you go on tampering with my best feelings, and wronging both yourself and me?"

"Dear father, in all that is good and right and just, I will seek to honor and please you, and do all you require of me; but as to associating with the Whitfields and their companions, merely because they occupy the false position they do, I can-

not. My better nature rebels, and will not submit. Instead of rising, it is stooping; for they are silly, and vain, and ignorant, and their society *degrades*. It does *not* elevate. I wonder that you, papa, with your classical education, and intellectual attainments, and long years of observation, could ask this of me."

"Come home," said he, or rather demanded; "no more of this to-night. *It must and shall be done*," he muttered half audibly. And silently they walked homeward.

"What does he mean?" thought Jennie; for she knew by the erect carriage, and haughty turn of the head, that his mind was made up to some stern resolve. But what *did* he purpose?

The sequel will tell.

CHAPTER XII.

We are apt to sit tired, patient as a fool,
While others gird us with the violent hands
Of social figments, feints and formalisms,
Reversing our straight natures, lifting up
Our base needs, keeping down our lofty thoughts.

Mrs. BROWNING.

THE little brown cottage in which Walter Newell died, two years ago, has been built larger, and its yard improved beautifully, and it has become the most tasteful and fashionable residence in Claremonte. It is the home of Charles and Mabel Stanton. He has entered upon a lucrative practice, and is an honor to his profession. Mabel, now that all tender influences are gone, strange as it may seem, is again the haughty woman, with the graceful carriage, and cold, bright beauty of face. Nature made her a warm-hearted, kind, loving woman; but fashion, the tyrant, in steeled armor, has crushed out that lovable charm in the female character. She is proud of being the handsomest, most accomplished and fashionable woman in Claremonte.

The owner of the piano, with whose sweetest strains went out the spirit of the dying boy, is now the intimate friend of

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Mabel, Lillian Everett. In beauty, she is unlike Mabel. Her hair is flaxen; her eyes blue; and not a tint of rosy health glows on her cheek, or gives buoyancy to her step. She is a sentimental dreamer, strong in her passions and likes and dislikes; but she is rich and fashionable, and one who reigneth—hence the friendship between her and Mabel.

“I tell you, Charlie, I never can nurse it; why, what would people say;” said Mabel, speaking faintly, while the nurse sat by the fire feeding a baby a few days old.

“Why, Mabel, don’t you love your own child—your little boy-baby?”

“Yes, I love it, of course, but I can’t bear the thoughts of bringing myself down on a level with a mere wet-nurse, who receives twelve shillings a week for wages. The idea is preposterous, Charlie. Why, if you looked at it as I do, you couldn’t love me afterwards. Mrs. Wade and Mrs. Appleton don’t nurse their own children; they send them out into the country, where it is more healthy, and then visit them every few days. Oh, Charlie, love, now don’t oppose me; this will be such a gay winter, and we will enjoy it so, if that little, dear draw-back of a baby is only in good hands.”

“Oh, Mabel, it don’t look right to put away one’s children that way, as though they were a burden and a trouble; and then we should deprive ourselves of his company, and his sweet little softening influence.”

“Why, Charlie Stanton! what a boor you are! A babe has no influence, unless it is to drive one distracted with its

incessant crying. Then I don't know how to 'tend children at all, and my health is poor too; but if you say so, I will consent to give up all my pleasure and stay at home all the time, and break down into an old, worn, weary woman;" and her voice shook and she hid her face in the pillow.

"Mabel, I only want you to do what is right, and what you consider to be your duty—no more than that—let your mother's heart decide. I put implicit confidence in your judgment. God knows you have been a true friend of mine; your womanly intuitiveness led you once before in a matter of great importance, let it lead you now;" and he stooped and kissed her fair cheek, and taking his hat started to go out; but the little pinky baby-hands clenched themselves into wee fists, moving restlessly, and he bent over to take another look at the object of so much interest.

"Ha, baby! look here!" and he moved his white fingers before the vacant eyes.

"Young childer don't see nothin' till they're nine days old," said the nurse, as she tucked the warm flannel blanket close up under its little red flabby ears.

"The deuce they don't!" said he, laughing heartily, at the observation; "I guess my boy is an exception then; ha, little fellow, look what a handsome, dignified gentleman your father is;" and he motioned a paper before the quiet, unwinking eyes of the baby, until he believed there was some truth in the assertion of the nurse.

"It has Mabel's mouth, the same sweet curve in the upper lip, and its forehead is just like its grandpa Hammond's."

"You ought to have credit for your wonderful discernment, Charles," said Mabel, as she turned away her head, "to think

that little red, ungainly lump of animation looks like me, or like father Hammond."

"It won't be six months, Mabel, until you would quarrel with me if I did not tell you the sweet child was the very image of his beautiful mother," said Charles, laughing, as he left the room.

"You will see, sir," she called out after him.

The nurse, who was only a temporary one, fed the babe sweetened milk and water enough at one feed for three different times; and when it cried from pain of being overfed, she thought it had the colic, and dosed it with catnip tea; that did not quiet it, and supposing the kind of tea was not strong enough for such a severe attack of colic, she laid it, screaming and writhing with pain, in its mother's arms, while she made strong tea of root, that was worse than the bitterest of coffee; and while she was dosing it with that, and jolting it on her sharp knees, enough to break and disjoint every pliant little bone in its body, Mrs. Wade and Mrs. Appleton came in.

Mabel was ashamed, and motioned them to be seated, the screaming of the baby preventing her from hearing the softly lisped words that dropped from Mrs. Appleton's lips.

"What will be done for that child, Mrs. Wade?" asked Mabel; "I am afraid it will scream itself to death."

"I don't know any more about taking care of babies than you do, Mrs. Stanton, but I presume a good dose of paregoric would help it."

"We have none, but could not laudanum be given instead?"

"Oh, yes; it is even better, for it is so much stronger. I will fix it;" and she took the spoon and vial from the nurse, and poured out several drops and put warm water with it;

and while the babe's mouth was wide open crying, turned the mixture down its throat. It caught its breath and strangled violently, and flung its arms up and lay half a minute purple and cold and stiff; then it caught a quick breath and lay quiet again, then another breath, and its limbs relaxed—it slowly revived.

"How long has it been sick?" asked one of the ladies.

"Oh, not more than an hour; it was taken suddenly while nurse was feeding it, and refused to eat," replied Mabel.

"It will get better now," said Mrs. Wade. "There is nothing in the world better for a babe than plenty of paregoric."

During this time the nurse sat staring at the ladies, and wondering how much such fine shawls cost, while baby lay on her lap without its blanket, which had fallen off when it first began to cry. Its blue looking arms were bare, as were its neck and shoulders. Its cry now was like a hoarse moan, and its little form shook and quivered as in an ague fit.

"Take it down into the kitchen, Rachel," said Mrs. Stanton, weary of its noise, and provoked at the stupidity of the gaping nurse.

She reluctantly left the room and carried it down into the kitchen.

"I do love babies; leetle, helpless creatures; give it right to its auntie," said the cook, a middle aged clever woman, who was stamping around preparing dinner; and she set herself down heavily on a box, and reached out her fat brown arms and hugged the moaning and chilled little babe close up to her broad, warm bosom.

"My Lord!" she cried out, "this chile will die of not bein'

well took care of;" and she called for a fresh diaper, and its shawl to be nicely warmed.

"Its leetle tooties are like the very marble;" and she turned the cold feet to the fire. "I declare, Rach, you ain't fit to touch such a precious darlin'; all that babies need is to be kep clean and dry and warm, 'tain't so much in the feedin' of them, for their stummix ain't bigger nor a thimble, and mity leetle sadisfies 'em. You lump of gold! I love ye better'n your mar darst to;" and she hugged it, all warm and comfortable, close to her motherly breast, and "*shu'd*" to it, until it fell into a heavy sleep. "Its leetle bowels is swelled up as tight as a drum—it's been overfed—its sleep ain't nateral no how; why it's as dead as a mitten in sleep—no health, nor no growin' while it's in this condition—the dear lamb." She softly unwrapped and gently rubbed its breast and bowels with oil, and then, covering it snugly, she laid it in her own bed; and crooning a loving lullaby, she softly drew the scant curtains and walked out on tip-toe.

Ah! there was no need of this unusual quiet, for the booming of cannon under the bed-room window, would not have disturbed the babe, hovering, as it were, on the confines of the grave. Ignorance and carelessness had well nigh completed their work.

"There is a great difference in children," remarked Mrs. Appleton, as the nurse left the room; "some are cross from their birth, while others are so sweet and good natured. For all the trouble my oldest child was, I could have nursed her

myself, but I hired a nurse and kept her in the house, and baby never was any trouble; but my other child cried continually. I had not a moment's peace until I hired a nurse to keep him away from home; and she told me she could not have got along with him at all, if she had not kept him dosed with paregoric."

"Have you selected a nurse yet, Mrs. Stanton, for your child?" asked Mrs. Wade.

"I have not—could you recommend one, a kind, careful woman?" said Mabel.

"I have been thinking about a girl who used to work for me," was the reply; "she has a child six weeks old; she lives with her mother who is an invalid, and I know she can not make a living honestly for all three of them. One might take the advantage of her necessities, and by paying her well, prevail on her to place hers in the alms house, and nurse yours. She is healthy, industrious and very kind-hearted, and would make an excellent nurse."

"I do hope I can obtain her services—it would just suit me: her mother being an invalid, she would require her to be at home, and my babe would be well taken care of, and I would be as free as if I had none," laughed Mabel; and, "just so," said the two unfeeling semi-mothers, laughing pleasantly.

"Oh, Mabel," said Mrs. Appleton, "there—excuse me—Mrs. Stanton; Mabel is such a sweet name that it beguiled me into undue familiarity."

"Not at all, Mrs. Appleton," said Mabel, "if you love the name I shall be proud to have you speak it, instead of the cold, precise Mrs. Stanton;" and she laid her hand kindly on the lady's arm.

"Well, I was going to remark that I did hope you would be well by the time the Malden's gave the first party of the season. We should miss you so if you were not there."

"Thank you—I hope I shall be well by that time; but my first trouble now is to get a good nurse for the baby. Don't you think that Mr. Stanton would prefer that I should nurse it?"

"Impossible!" said Mrs. Wade, arching her eyebrows.

"Horrible!" said Mrs. Appleton, lifting her hands in gesture, as frightened as though Mabel had just said that Mr. Stanton desired the child should be sent off to the Cannibals, for a desert after their dinners; or given to the Camanches to be used as a target.

"That is the way with a husband—placing no value on his wife's beauty, health, accomplishments or position in society. Now Wade proposed to me, when Carrie was born, that I should nurse her. I just told him plainly, society had a class made up of servant girls, cooks, washerwomen and nurses and such like, and another class of ladies; and that he never would see me come down to an equality with nurses; and I forbade another word on the subject, and he left me to do as I pleased. Carrie is not precocious—rather dull, and does not incline to study and learn, and he often says he fears her nurse gave her too much paregoric and blunted her powers of mind; but I am satisfied it is nothing of the kind, for I used to visit her twice a week, and generally found her quiet, or enjoying a healthful sleep; and the nurse said she was always the same way. So there was no need of giving opiates when she was good. Some men are so willful and thoughtless, though."

The ladies rose to depart, and Mabel begged them to call

often, as she took no pleasure in any other company. Flattered with the compliment, they took their leave.

When Charles came home to dinner, he greeted Mabel kindly, and looked into her eyes to see if he could read a favorable answer to his wishes respecting the baby. The expression could not be interpreted, but he hoped favorably from her cheerfulness.

"Where is the boy, Mabel?" said he, looking at the foot of the bed and in the pillowed chair that stood by the fire.

"Oh, Charles, he nearly screamed himself to death while Mrs. Wade and Mrs. Appleton were here, and I sent Rachel to the kitchen with him, and I've not thought of him since."

"I'll go and look after him," said Charlie, and he went down to the kitchen.

The nurse sat nodding over an old dream book, while the cook was dishing the dinner.

"Where's baby?" he asked, looking about.

"Come an' see the dear chile," said the red-faced cook, as she led the way into her bed room. Very carefully did she draw back the curtains and lift her best gauze veil from the sleeping babe. "Poor dear! it cried itself e'enmost to death, and now it sleeps as heavy as a log."

"How sunken its eyes are, and how blue it does look," said the tender father, bending down to hear it breathe. Its breathings were low and far between. "The child is cold; better wrap it up warmer," said he, as he touched the back of his hand to its cheek, and turned away to his dinner.

"Don't Mrs. Stanton want any dinner?" he asked of the nurse.

"I dunno," was the reply, as she turned the leaves of the book without raising her head.

"Ask her, and find out," he said, gruffly, as he helped himself to the delicately broiled wing of a chicken.

The girl dragged her misshapen self off up stairs, walking as though she was shod like a horse.

Mr. Stanton fairly ground his teeth, as he thought, "And is *my* babe intrusted to such care?"

This was a fortunate incident for the furtherance of Mabel's plan of letting her babe out to nurse.

When Charlie came up to Mabel's room, the first object he saw, was Rachel, comfortably nestling on the pillows in the easy chair that was purposely arranged for the tender little birdling-boy, the odious dream book in her hand.

"Don't you want any dinner, wife?" said he, kindly.

"Yes; I'd like a cup of tea, and a little fresh bread and butter; that's all I care for."

"Rachel might have had it here by this time," said he, testily. "I sent her up to ask you, more than twenty minutes since, if you wanted anything."

"She forgot her errand, then, I guess," said Mabel, smiling.

Charles was a good, kind man; but he was passionate at times, and now his anger rose justly, and stepping up to Rachel, who had began to move, he took the book from her hand and thrust it into the stove, and said:

"Now go to the kitchen, and eat a hearty dinner; then come to me, and I will pay you, and let you go."

She rose, pursed out her thick lips, and muttered something about "civility;" but Charles gave her a slight push towards the door, which accelerated her speed.

"I sometimes think, Mabel, I'd rather be a poor man, tilling the soil for others, and earning the sweet morsel, than to be kept under, like we are, by coarse, conceited hirelings. I have hated the sight of that overbearing thing ever since she has been here. She is no more fit to take care of our dear baby than Jack, the stable boy."

Mabel laughed merrier than she had for long months before; and when at last she wiped her eyes, and paused to rest from exhaustion, she said the poor girl's constant companion had been sacrificed in the flames, and her life would now be lonely and widowed.

Charlie said he would pay her extra for the loss of so valuable a book; and then he hurried down stairs, and sent the cook up with the tea, while he stole into the bedroom to kiss and gaze upon the jewel, more precious to him than mountains of gold and millions of pearls.

When Mabel informed the cook of the dismissal of the nurse, she said she was glad, and could easily take the place of her, and do all her own work besides.

"And now, Mabel, have you decided?" said Charles, as he returned to her room.

"What? about baby?"

"Yes," said he, sitting down, hoping her wishes would meet his own.

"Well, Charlie, I wish to do justice to ourselves and our child, both; that which is best for my health and his, and for your comfort and mine. There is a poor girl near town, who is the sole support of a widowed mother, who is likewise an invalid. Her babe is six weeks old. Her fall came not from a corrupt heart; so she is respectable, healthy, industrious and

affectionate. I think if she was paid a good sum she would take baby, and nurse him, and willingly let some of her friends take her child. Only for a few months, and we could often go out and see the little fellow. This is what I wish, and I cannot freely consent to any other plan. There is nothing unreasonable in that, is there? Remember our social position, and what is required, nay demanded of us. It will be well if we can maintain its requirements, and do right by our child. Indeed, I think we are very fortunate in having all things work so well."

Charles was leaning down, on his hands, and in the struggle between the false demands of society, and the first joyous gush of parental love that filled his overcharged heart, he could scarcely repress a groan of anguish.

"I will try and submit, Mabel. It may be best as you say; but oh! the love for my darling little son overmasters all else. I feel as if no sacrifice were too great to make for that child. I don't know how to bear it, Mabel;" and he groaned aloud.

"Come here, Charlie," and she wound her arms about his neck, and pillowed his head upon her bosom. "Why, Charlie, don't be so foolish now. He is such a charge, and so cross, and puny; and the girl knows how to care for babies; and in six or eight months he will come back to us a rosy, bright, little romp; and then we will have him with us all the time, and learn him how to talk; and his sweet prattle will be like music to our ears. Now he is poor and homely; and cries, and can't tell me from the cook. Oh! it is no pleasure to have him now. The natural nourishment of nature, which I have not, will be his; and he will grow fat and fair and dim-

pling, and so beautiful. Won't he dear?" and she smoothed back his hair caressingly, and spoke in her softest tones.

"But, Mabel," and he drew back, "is it right to ask or tempt the poor girl-mother to put away the light of *her* life? is it not wrong?"

"Not when she is perfectly willing, and can find a good place for her babe."

He sat a moment longer in painful thought, then rose, saying: "Well, let it be so, Mabel. You know best; but oh! it is so hard to bear!" and he left the room, paid the nurse, and went to his office.

Mabel lay in deep thought; circumstances are complicated; she was surrounded as by meshes that were only waiting to entangle her when she went a step farther.

"He will never consent to have the girl put her child in the almshouse, and I must use all arguments in my power to prevail on her to do it, and not let Charlie know it either;" and Mabel knit her brows together in thought.

While she was meditating a plan to keep the worst from Charles's knowledge, her intimate friend, Lillian Everett, came.

"Oh! Lillian, I'm so glad you've come," cried Mabel, reaching out her arms towards her.

"Is there anything I can do for you, ma belle?" she asked.

"Yes, everything. Charlie has consented that I may put baby out to nurse; and there is a girl living near town, who has a baby and an old invalid mother. Now, my plan is to prevail on her to put hers in the almshouse and take ours. I am afraid she will not consent; and I want you to see her and bring her here; and we will talk with her. I want it done

to-day, before Charles gets to loving the baby any more than he does already. He is real foolish about it."

"I'll do all I can to help you, Mabel. I want the babe to be in good hands, so you will have your entire freedom again. Where is the little cub?" and she looked among the pillows on the chair.

"Cook has him down in the kitchen; he's been so cross this morning, I sent him off," replied Mabel; "and now let us try and settle this matter before Charlie gets home."

"Well, what shall I do?" said Lillian, rising.

"Go to Mrs. Wade's, and tell her to send for the girl to come immediately to her house; then you fetch her up to my room, and be quick, for fear of a scene, and Charlie dropping in as a witness."

Lillian drew on her gloves, and went out on a brisk walk.

In less than two hours she returned with the girl, who was dressed in black, and had a neat, prepossessing appearance. She was not more than nineteen years old; but her pale, sad face bore traces of the trial and suffering and heart-sorrows, through which she had lived. Mabel, through selfish motives, spoke kindly and in her softest tones to the girl.

"I have heard of your sorrows, and sympathize with you," she said, "and if there is anything I can do to assist you, I shall be happy to do it. There is more or less of sorrow in all our lives, but I believe it leaves our souls stronger and purer and better, and our spiritual vision is made clearer for those blessings in disguise."

"Bless you, lady! I have groped about in utter darkness, searching and praying for light, and hungering for kind words, but I found them not. The Bible had lost all its beauty and

truth, and there was no comfort for me. I thank you—I do thank you!” and the broken-hearted girl sobbed aloud.

Mabel! Mabel! the woman, down deep in her heart, was touched, and through misty eyes she looked upon the poor girl and choked down her sobs. She felt it not, but her good angel fluttered down and gently and softly laid its hand on her brow in blessing.

“Has your mother been an invalid long?” asked Lillian, wishing to draw Mabel’s attention to her negotiation with the girl.

“About three years, Miss,” was the reply.

“I wish to obtain a nurse for my babe,” said Mabel, “and you have been recommended by the most reliable lady in Claremonte, as respectable, industrious and affectionate. I will pay you well for your trouble.”

“I could not take care of two babes, could I, without overtasking myself? but if you think I can—” and she paused with parted lips, eager to hear a favorable response.

“I think you could not do justice to yourself and *both* children,” said Mabel, cautiously, as if afraid to venture further. “I want my babe well cared for, let it cost what it will.”

“Have you no friend near you who could take your’s awhile—no cousin, or aunt, or relative?” asked Lillian, coming to Mabel’s relief.

“Oh, no, no!” said the girl, shaking her head; “I could not part with my little Nora! she begins to notice me, and laugh and coo so prettily;” and the mother-love beamed out brightly in her sad, sweet face.

“You know if by any trifling sacrifice, such as merely parting a few months with your babe, you could purchase all the

luxuries of life for your kind old mother in her last years, it is your *duty* to do it willingly,” said Lillian coolly.

“Yes, I presume it is,” said the girl slowly, as if she did not see clearly.

“Now if you will put your babe, just for six or eight months, into good hands, where you can go and see it often; and take mine to your bosom, and tenderly care for it, I will pay you liberally, and give you in advance a present of a good sum besides. Yours has been a tender mother—she cared lovingly for you all through your infancy and childhood, and now, when the strong arm on which she leaned lies nerveless in death, it is your duty, and should be your sweetest pleasure, to minister kindly to all her wants and necessities.”

The poor girl sat weeping, while Mabel, with the cold, bright beauty of face, continued,

“It is probable you have caused her to shed bitter tears over your errors, and well nigh broken her heart over the misfortune that your own imprudence brought upon you.”

“Oh, yes, yes! I have! I have!” cried the penitent girl, rising and walking the floor, while she wrung her hands in unutterable woe.

Mabel saw that she had struck harshly upon the right chord, and she lost no time in tearing the covering from the cold, hard truth, and holding it up before the frenzied girl. She pictured skillfully the last days of the old mother passed in comfort and plenty; and of its certain tendency to obliterate from the girl’s memory all remorse for having grieved her mother; of her babe being separated from her only a little time; of the trivial sacrifice she would have to make to insure so happy a change in their circumstances; of her unpardon-

able selfishness if she refused; of the blessing of God on the child who honors and loves her parents; and of the sweet peace of mind the consciousness of doing good always brings; and of the rich reward, spiritually, morally and in a secular point of view.

The girl, Mary Benton, stood calm and erect and determined before her. She looked down into Mabel's large, soft, brown eyes, earnestly, and in a low, steady voice, said: "*I will do it*," and compressed her lips and looked on until Mabel turned away uneasily, and fearful lest the strange burning gaze betokened insanity.

"God help me, I will do it—I thank you lady—give me the baby now while I am firm and strong, and while my eye is on God's," and she rubbed her forehead quickly as though an aspic sting had pierced her there, and walked back and forth across the room.

"Tell cook to fetch him up, Lillian," said Mabel; and as she left the room, Mabel laid a purse into the girl's hand. She clutched it eagerly, and her lips parted in a hard, stony smile, as she held it in her hand a moment, then put it in her pocket.

The cook soon came up with the baby, and stood holding it as though waiting further orders; when Mary rose, and taking the child kissed it warmly and murmured, "I love you already, darling." It opened its eyes sleepily, and smiling, slumbered on. She pressed its lips to her full, white breast, saying: "Drink, little lamb, drink;" but the mouth closed and its sleep was unbroken.

"Have you been administering an opiate?" she asked in a sweet, low, winning tone, as she looked so pitifully down upon the sunken, half-open eyes—the twitching of the muscles.

"Yes, it had to have one; it was not very well, said Mabel."

"Give me its clothes, and let me go now;" and her voice was a little tremulous.

"Lord, misses, you ain't a goin' to part with this chile no how, are ye?"

"No questions, cook, from you; when I need your counsel I will ask it. Get the baby's clothes for Mary."

A great band box was soon brought in by the cook, who came wiping her eyes on her sleeve, and not daring to look towards the baby. As she shut the door to go down, the pent-up grief burst out, and they heard the cries grow fainter and fainter, as she neared the kitchen. When she got there she flung herself upon the bed, and burying her face in the pillow screamed in uncontrollable sorrow.

"The darlin' lamb! here's where his blessed leetle heady laid—oh, my heart will break—he was the very picture of an angel, he was. I don't b'leve his mar loved him one mite, for she never wanted him to nuss a bit nor grain—the proud creetur. The Lord'll bring it all right yet, and I bet her heart'll ache for this very day's work;" and she soothed herself by thinking how good it would be to see the young mother suffer for her misdeeds. This satisfactory thought calmed her rebellious outburst, and rising, she folded the vail that had covered the baby's face; and as she laid it away with her Sunday bonnet, she muttered: "I feel as if I'd never kiver my face agin with that 'ere vail, for I'd be all the time thinkin' o' my lost lam! She's wus nor ary heathen, she is!" and the poor woman went about preparing supper.

Mary had an acquaintance, a poor woman who used to wash for her father's family in better days, but of late, sickness and

trouble and poverty had come upon them; the husband had died, and the poor widow and babe had been taken to the almshouse. The babe was sick when they went there, and had since died. Mary had, with a sickened heart, resolved to put her little Nora into the care of Mrs. Price, the poor widow.

That evening, after she took Mabel's babe home, she laid it in bed with her mother and stole out, and went to see Mrs. Price, whom she found crying and fretting over the loss of her child.

Mary laid the case before the matron and the widow. "It is all the plan I have in which I can earn anything," said Mary, with the same tearless mien she wore when she parted from Mabel. "I can not go out to work and leave mother, and sewing yields such a mere pittance, it only serves to hold soul and body together. It breaks my heart to part from Nora, but it seems best, and it will be only for a few months, besides I can run over and see her every day," and she actually smiled, a strange, joyless smile; so strong was she in her duty, and in doing what she thought was right.

"I assure you, Miss Benton, your child will be well cared for. I have been wishing ever since Mrs. Price's babe died, that some one would bring a babe here; it is just what she needs to divert her mind from her sorrows and make her cheerful," said the matron, a kind old lady.

"I wish the babe was here now," plained the poor bereft widow; "for I want something to love."

"She shall come to-night," said Mary, "if the trustees are willing;" and she went off to see them.

When she had told her story to them, and said she would be

glad to earn enough to keep her invalid mother comfortable and out of the almshouse, they with one united voice approved her plan, and honored her for being firm and resolute enough to make a sacrifice which was so painfully trying to a mother's love.

One of the trustees, Carl Winters, was a young widower who had been a suitor of Mary's in other days; poor fellow! he drew his hand suspiciously across his eyes, and thought of his own motherless babe in its grandmother's care. He asked himself if *he* could make the sacrifice of being separated from his child—if for his mother's comfort he could give up the evening romp with his baby, and not kiss it a good night and see it laid tenderly on the white pillow; but the thought made the sobs rise chokingly in his throat, as he said in a low, broken voice: "You are a good girl—God bless you, Mary! and He will bless you, too, for this noble sacrifice, and like sweet incense it rises up to that God who has said 'Honor thy father and thy mother.'"

It was with great difficulty that Mary could obtain her mother's consent to allow the widow Price to take Nora awhile to nurse.

"You know, Mary, the baby has twined around our hearts so, that it will nearly kill us to part with her, the loving little creature! Now, this boy-baby lies dull and dumb, and won't waken or laugh at all, and I am afraid he will never be any company for me. What a comfort a baby is! Oh, in a house they are what birds and flowers and sunshine are to the earth; ain't they, Mary, child?"

"Oh, yes; and, mamma, we ought to be glad, after all our trouble, that God has sent this little angel into our desolate,

lonely home—dear baby Nora; if it was to have been my destiny, mamma, that I should never be a wife, never have been a mother otherwise, then do I thank God for the gift of this precious babe, and for opening the sweetest fountain in a woman's nature—*mother-love*. All the glory is shut out from womanhood in this life, if the cold gray stone is never lifted away from off the pent-up fountain, and its sweet pure waters permitted to gush out into the warm sunlight! I do bless God that I am a mother! darling little Nora, mine!" and she snatched up the laughing babe, and its moist red lips grew redder after the hearty kissing the poor girl-mother gave it.

"Oh, mamma, ask God to keep our hearts both firm and brave, now in this hour of trial. I feel so irresolute and shaken that I have to keep my nerves and my resolves braced, and my eye on God all the time. He is looking very lovingly down upon me, and yet—and yet—oh, mamma"—a long, low, suppressed cry wailed out, and the poor girl sat with her eyes closed, her white face upturned in prayer, and her long fingers locked together—while the baby lay on her knees, murmuring a soft gurgle, like a song it was trying to learn. The invalid closed her eyes, and for a few moments was engaged in earnest prayer. Then Mary rose, and laid Nora in her cradle and hurriedly gathered up her little stock of baby-wear, and putting it together in a bundle, she ran down to a neighbor's, and told her she was ready.

The woman had kindly proposed carrying Nora over to Mrs. Price, and without asking any more questions, she put on her bonnet, and laying her warm shawl upon her arm, started.

"Go right in," said Mary, "as quick as you can; perhaps mother won't observe that it is you; snatch her up and go

without permitting mother to kiss, or cry, or part with her. Will you do it, now?" and she clutched her arm tightly.

"Yes, I will," said the woman, and then observing Mary's wild white face, she turned to the cupboard, and pouring out half a glass of wine, made her drink it before she left her.

When the sound of the woman's steps had died away, Mary sank down upon her knees and prayed for strength to bear her above this great sorrow, and that faith be given her to see beyond the trials of earth to the blessedness of the reward that awaiteth the upright in heart. She prayed that the baby-Nora might be spared, in all her winsome beauty, to brighten and cheer the darkened home-hearth, that would now be a place of mourning—a nest from which the birdling had flown.

And Nora's father, the heartless seducer who had won her, and then flung her from him, lured away by brighter eyes, and a newer and a fairer face—for him she prayed, that even as she forgave him, would the Father also forgive—watching over and leading in pleasant paths the perjured one.

Nora was a soft bright link that christianized every thought she cherished towards him, preventing it from being unkind and harsh.

So beautiful an influence has a silent, voiceless babe! It takes the sting from unkind words, and soothes anger and petulance—making the stern man forget the troublous aspect of financial affairs, and the wearied mother the weight of cares that lay so heavily upon her, waking into a fresher glow her cheerfulness, coaxing the forced smile into a warm burst of laughter, and the merry thought into a lightsome snatch of song!

Mary laid the purse on her mother's bed, and tried to be cheerful when she saw the contents poured out on the counterpane. There was nearly twenty dollars. "And now, mother, give me the bill of fare, and I will fill it out to your satisfaction," said Mary, putting on her bonnet, and trying to be cheerful.

"Oh, I never want to eat any more," cried out the poor woman, and she wept bitterly. "I wanted to kiss Nora once more so bad!" and she cried like a petted little girl.

"Oh, mother, I am stronger than you are," said Mary, standing erect, and compressing her twitching lips. "I'll get some good tea, and a loaf, and a roll of real country butter, and some cheese; shall I?" and she turned towards the door, leaving the purse and its contents lying on the bed.

How bravely she struggled! but, alas! for the woman's heart once warmed by the holy love known only to mothers! Her self-made resolutions crumbled and fell to dust.

She returned and flung herself in her mother's arms, and the two sorrowing ones wept aloud. They had no consoling words for each other—the sweetest and surest relief lay in tears.

"Oh, Mary, was it right, do you think, to let Nora go? I'd rather live on roots, and have her with me, than to be a queen and be deprived of her dear presence."

"Why, mother, I know we are very foolish. We love Nora too well, and we must remember God only lent her to us. He may take her back any moment; no tears or pleadings of ours can keep her here. Her little life is a very feeble thread, easily broken."

"I will remember this, and think it is best. Why, we can see her often, can't we, Mary?"

"Every day, mamma, I mean to fetch her over awhile."

"Well, go now, Mary, and make your purchases, and let us have a cosy little tea together. The baby stirs; but I will keep him in my bosom snug and quiet, until you come back."

Mary went out feeling relieved at seeing her mother so hopeful.

And all that evening the tears were kept back; and they played with the boy-baby, and apparently spent the time pleasantly; and yet theirs were aching hearts, seeking to sustain and cheer and shut out from each other's thoughts the picture of a sweet baby, in its white night-gown, with its dimpled cheek pillowed on another's breast, and its precious little hands nestling in another's bosom.

CHAPTER XIII

I never liked the woman's face or voice
Or ways ; it made me blush to look at her ;
It made me tremble if she touched my hand ;
And when she spoke a fondling word I shrank,
As if one hated me who had power to hurt ;
And every time she came, my veins ran cold,
As somebody were walking on my grave.

"AURORA LEIGH."

"Do you love me, mother?" asked Alice of Cicely, one morning, after her mother had been showing her how her own neat little aprons were put together.

"Why, yes, darling; certainly I do. What makes you ask such a strange question as that?"

"Oh, nothing; only I wondered if step-mothers did love little girls very much."

"Was that the only reason you asked, Alice?"

"No, mother," said the little girl, timidly, biting her thumb, and looking intently into the red heart of a flower upon the carpet; "why, Grace Lee said she believed you didn't love me a bit; and that I needn't mind you, unless I wanted to, 'cause you wasn't the mother that is dead—not the real, real mother," said the child, with an abashed, guilty look.

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"Am I not kind to you, Allie? Don't I dress you warm and good, and give you nice victuals, and talk good to you, just like a ma?" said Cicely, her brow reddening.

"Yes, mother; I know you do all that; and I told Grace I'd rather have you for my mother than hers; for hers pinches and pulls ears, and slaps and scolds; and you don't do that. Grace said she often wished her mother was dead, so they could get another who would be kind to them."

"Grace talks wicked, and I believe it is her fault that her mother has to punish her so often," said Cicely.

"She says she wouldn't wear flannel dresses to school in the winter," said Alice, after a pause of a moment.

"She don't know what is best for growing little girls, who have to walk to school, through cold and snow; but don't let us talk any more about this. Let us be above minding what gossiping women and foolish little girls say," said Cicely. "Let us do all the good we can in our own humble way, and let them enjoy their own opinions. There is a great deal said about step-mothers that is false. All their errors are magnified and their good qualities hidden."

Cicely had taken up her sewing, and was very busy, and did not see Mrs. Lee's little boy, who had come and was standing in the door, with a card in his hand. Neither saw him, for they sat near a window with their faces from the door. The boy stood a few seconds, then turned and went home again, without making his errand known, or being seen at all.

A poor man in that neighborhood had died, leaving a large family quite destitute. The good old pastor, a man beloved by all, had written invitations to be sent to all the families in

Glen Green, requesting them to donate grain, wheat, flour, pork, or whatever they had to share, and for each mother to meet at the parsonage for the same worthy purpose, bringing garments or material to make them, thus combining sociability and benevolence. The notes of invitation had been left for distribution at brother Lee's.

When the little boy had got half way home, he stopped, and wondered if he had better destroy the card. Just then a large bird came swooping down between the pines that overhung the banks of the stream, and skimmed along over the surface, and lit on the opposite side of the brook.

"Now, old bald head, I'll give you a knock," said the little fellow, and a stone buzzed across and struck the log on which the bird sat. "Just wait," said the boy, and he kept his eyes on him while he felt around for another stone. The bird tipped his shiny head on one side, as though winking defiance; but the next stone whizzed like an arrow, and passed directly between his feet. As the stone flew with so fair an aim from the little right hand, the card fluttered whitely down, down, the air bearing it away until it fell into the stream, and glided away on the ripples.

"That's no matter. I'll tell the old woman a good story about it," said the boy, with his snaky black eyes fixed on the log from which the bird had flown. "Oh! but ain't I a good shot? How mad it would make Bill Charles, if he'd seen that performance. I b'leve William Tell couldn't a done any better than that at my age. I'm only ten;" and he looked down his dumpy legs as though he were a prodigy; then taking a mouthful of tobacco, and, straightening to his utmost, he started homeward. Every time he essayed to get

the huge quid between his jaws, his eyes pulled away down. Any observant person coming after, would have known, by the slimy streaks of brown spittle, spun hither and thither across the road, that a precocious specimen of young America had preceded him. The trail was unmistakable.

"Well, Johnny Mortimer, did you see Mrs. Lisle?" said his mother, when he got home.

"Yes."

"Is she going to the parson's this afternoon?"

"Don't know—didn't say," was the reply.

"Did she seem pleased with the invitation?"

"She just looked at it—stuck it in the stove."

"Did you see Alice?"

"Yes; leanin' down; couldn't see her face."

"Didn't she say anything to you?"

"No; she never looked up."

"Likely she'd got whipped if she had looked up."

"Spect so."

"Well, I reckon we can get along without her ladyship's company at the minister's. She's nothing fit to wear, if she did go," said Mrs. Lee, and she took up a white satin ribbon and began trimming a fine lace cap.

"Where's the old man and the boys workin' to-day?" said Johnny Mortimer, as he rose and stretched himself, and looked down his dumpy legs again, and squirted a stream of tobacco juice into the fire.

"John Mortimer! your *father* is in the barn, shelling corn; the boys are hauling rails. Remember how you speak about certain people," and she tried to put on a grieved look.

After an early dinner, the women began to assemble at the parsonage.

Mrs. Phillips, the minister's wife, was just such a woman as all parsons' wives should be—kind, truthful, affectionate, charitable, and ready to impute the best of motives to every person, a Christian in every sense of the term. With her slightly silvered hair parted smoothly away from her brow, she moved easily and quietly among her guests, her sweet face carrying light with it wherever it went.

"It seems to me," whispered Mrs. Charles to Mrs. Carter, "that our minister's wife ought to have a new dress. I am tired to death of that everlasting brown merino. Why, she's worn it this nine years, on special occasions."

"Oh, it looks most as good as new yet," was the reply. "Seems to me these plain, quiet colors suit her so well. She is meek and unassuming, and her dress is always well chosen, and seems in harmony and good taste."

"Oh, my! I like something that contrasts pleasantly with these old dreary rocks and evergreen trees that always surround us. Now, I think my dress is far more suitable," and she gathered up a fold for inspection—sky-blue and yellow, and fiery, dazzling red, and light green, in broad stripes that made her gaunt figure look even taller than it was.

"Yes, yours is pretty for the kind, and for those who admire gay colors," said the widow Carter, looking down at her own rusty black, that she had worn for two or three years.

Just then Mrs. Lee came in, red and puffing from her walk, a boy following, who carried a large bundle designed for the poor family.

"How do you do, Mrs. Phillips? I had a mind not to

come at all to-day, for I had so little to give I was ashamed anybody should see my mite."

"You must remember, sister Lee," said mother Phillips, "that it is the spirit in which we give good gifts, that makes them acceptable; and it is little matter what our neighbors say or think. We should not seek to win their good opinions, but look higher, and study well our own hearts, and see if we are prompted to give by the right kind of spirit."

Mrs. Lee was determined to give more than any other woman; for in all things praiseworthy she loved to excel and listen to the plaudits and excite the envy of her neighbors who were not so wealthy.

"Where do you put the gifts, Mrs. Phillips?" said she, beginning to untie the pillow-case which she had brought.

"I will put it away," said the pastor's wife, taking the bundle out of her hands, and carrying it to a closet, set it inside on a chest.

Mother Phillips was a woman of tact; she saw that Mrs. Lee was meditating a display, and her heart was pained at the unworthy manifestation; for it showed a worldliness that was not in accordance with a christian spirit. There were a great many poor women present, whose little gifts would have looked despicable in their own eyes, if contrasted with Mrs. Lee's. She was determined to baffle the proud woman in her vain-glorious scheme.

While the women were sewing and talking, their pastor came in, sat down among them, and entered into pleasant conversation.

"I believe all the women in the Glen are here to-day," said he.

"Mrs. Williams sent her gift by me, and begged to be excused, as her father and mother are expected this afternoon," said Mrs. Carter.

"I must take an early opportunity of calling on her father," said Mr. Phillips. "He was one of the deacons in the church over which I presided in Vernon, Vermont. A very excellent man, too."

"What did Mrs. Williams donate, Mrs. Carter?" said Mrs. Lee, hardly waiting for the minister to finish his remark.

"Her parcel was tied, and I did not open it, of course," was the reply.

"I hope she gave more than I did," laughed Mrs. Lee. "Has there been much brought in?"

There was no answer for some time; then Mrs. Phillips said, "Yes, a great deal that will add to the comfort of the family."

"I suppose," said Mrs. Lee, moving her chair nearer the parson's wife, "the widow will be obliged to bind out her children. Won't she, think?"

"She has not said anything about it yet. Her trouble has been deep, and she has not made up her mind what to do."

"She can't make a living with all her young 'uns to provide for, and her health poor. It's folly to think o' the like," said Mrs. Lee, smoothing down the satiny ties of her cap.

"You must be charitable, Mrs. Lee," said mother Phillips. "You do not think it would be right for her to indent her little ones, do you?"

"Indeed, sister Phillips, I do. Every chick and child of 'em but the baby, and that too, if it's very troublesome. When she is well rid of her children, she can get a good situ-

ation somewhere as housekeeper, and support herself like a born lady, and may be marry right well off in the end?"

"A true mother would rather share pinching poverty with her dear babes, than to live like a princess, and be separated from them, and not know what lessons of wrong were being instilled into their young and pure minds," said Mrs. Carter, and her cheek paled, when she thought of the time in which poverty and her fatherless babes were her only portion.

"It is not always right to allow poor, weak-minded widows to decide what is right for their children. Many and many a one would stand right in the way of what would be best, and keep it away from their poor children. Some such women don't know what is best," and the hard woman's eyes looked as cold and glittering as an icicle.

"The best way for any one to decide a momentous question like this, especially where the well being of loving and beloved children is at stake, is to apply the golden rule. That is the best guide for every person in almost any peculiar position involving principle. It is unfailing. One cannot go far wrong if it is taken for a guide," said the pastor, looking sharply at sister Lee.

"I don't want to be unjust, parson, but we don't want to work hard to maintain our own families, and help keep an idle throng besides, just merely because the weak mother loves them, and wants to have 'em in her sight all the time."

"You must be more liberal-minded, sister Lee. Your ideas of a mother's duty to her children are narrow. You must remember there is nothing in nature holier than a mother's love. God implanted it there. A woman's crown of glory is her mother-life. Don't desecrate it by one thought that is not

high and pure and inlinked with heaven and God's love. Oh! I would ask no higher commendation of a woman's character, than is embodied in the magic words, *she loves her children*," said mother Phillips, her mild eyes growing dark and bright and lustrous.

Mrs. Lee said nothing in reply, but rising to hide her embarrassment, asked Mrs. Loring if she had seen a skein of thread lying on the floor anywhere. Mrs. Loring rose and looked about her chair; so did all the other women, shaking their skirts and looking intently for the lost thread.

Mrs. Lee felt in her pocket, and about her neck, and in her bosom, and then, as if suddenly recollecting, she said she believed she had slipped it into the pillow-case; and going to the closet, she brought it, and commenced taking out the articles slowly and one at a time, as if searching for the thread. First she took out a pair of fine pillow-cases, handsomely edged with a vine in embroidery; then a pair of good linen towels; then a pair of soft, warm hose for the widow; a cloth coat for a little boy; a pair of yarn mittens; a gingham dress for a little girl; two flannel petticoats for children; a warm, black silk hood for the widow; a half worn mourning veil; new cloth for the largest boy a pair of pantaloons; two pounds of sugar and six pounds of coffee. The thread was not found; but the gratification of displaying her good gifts was found. She said it was very strange where the thread could be; she was quite certain it was in there before she had looked; and, gathering up the things, she put them back with a careless air, as though she was not conscious of having displayed them.

"I am afraid Mrs. Lisle will not favor us with her company to-day," said Mrs. Phillips, looking up at the clock.

"I sent John Mortimer over with the invitation this morning," said Mrs. Lee.

"Did you not send until this morning?"

"No; I wanted Mortimer to go over yesterday, but I couldn't get him off. He said she acted very careless, and went and put the invitation in the stove, and that poor Alice was crying, and never looked up or said a word to him. He said she looked as though she had been whipped."

"No danger of Cicely's whipping Alice; she loves her too well," said Mrs. Carter.

"Allie's a quiet, serious, thoughtful little thing," said Mrs. Loring.

"Well, if she ain't here with her donation to-day, she will do a good share towards helping the widow another time," said the pastor.

"Yes, there's not a kinder, better woman living, than just Cicely Lisle," said Mrs. Jones.

"Step-mothers will be talked about so, let 'em do right or wrong, that I wonder how she could bear to be a step-mother," remarked Mrs. Lee.

"Oh, my dear woman! if suspicious, unworthy persons do assail the general character of step-mothers, no truly noble woman would be frightened from assuming that honorable position merely to shun the inevitable flow of gossip which is so unjust and silly," said mother Phillips, warmly.

"It's a place I wouldn't like to fill," said Mrs. Lee, with a decided jerk of her head.

"It is a very, very responsible position," said Mr. Phillips. "There is the bleeding heart of the bereft husband to soothe and heal, and the poor motherless babes to love and train very

tenderly, and the place of the pattern wife to fill, while the argus eyes of old aunts, and maiden cousins, and meddlesome neighbors, are gleaming upon her like hungry, wolfish eyes; and wolfish claws are hidden in silk and kid gloves, that gently press her timid hand, while they are eager to stain and tear and feast and glut themselves upon her fair fame."

"I had a step-mother," said Mrs. Phillips, "a modest, meek, loving one, who took me to her bosom when I was a babe, and she could not have loved me more, or treated me any kinder, had I been her own baby."

Just then the parson's little grandson, Willie Neal, came running into the room with a card in his hand, and his coat sleeve dripping wet to the elbow.

"We've had the most fun, dranpa, Jimmy Loring and me! ha! ha! We's out in the skiff on the creek, and we saw somethin' white come swimming down; and Jimmy he said the best fellow will get that feather, or whatever it is; and him and me we both tried with the oars to turn it toward us; and we paddled, and laughed, and worked, and my paddle brought it right up to me; and Jimmy jumped right at it, and made a grab and pushed my arm in under the water; but I held it tight in between my thumb and finger, and I jumped and run home, and him after me, wishing it had been him who was the best fellow. Oh! it was good fun, now I tell ye dranpa!" and he bent over and laughed heartily.

"Was this it?" said his grandfather, carelessly sliding his glasses down over his eyes, and taking the wet card. He looked at it, saying, "Why! what's this? It is the very card that was sent to Mrs. Lisle! her invitation, sure as the world it is!"

"Oh, it can't be! John Mortimer saw her stick it in the stove," said Mrs. Lee in great embarrassment, coming up and looking over at it.

"It looks like it; but I guess there are other cards in the world besides this one," said Mr. Phillips, and to save the poor woman's feelings he hurriedly twisted it up, and tossed it into the fire.

"No, it couldn't be that one," said Mrs. Lee, resuming her work, but visibly mortified.

Ah! murder will out! It was the identical card.

After this incident Mrs. Lee did not say much, but the firm horizontal lines between her eyes, those tell-tale wrinkles, and the hard, stony expression about her mouth, carried a truth in them that did not argue much in favor of John Mortimer's welfare, on her return home.

She felt chagrined, and would be likely to wreak her vengeance on the poor boy. She was a mother who believed in diligently using the rod. She said she never had time or patience to sit down and try moral suasion. There was always so much work to do, and oversee, that she could get along faster to give the offender a sound thrashing and done with it, and save half an hour of time.

Alas for the world! there are too many such mothers.

CHAPTER XIV.

Great God, to whom
I once knelt innocent, is this my doom?
Are all my dreams, my hopes of heavenly bliss,
My purity, my pride, then come to this?

MOORE'S LALLA ROOKE.

Oh, bitter hour! when first the shuddering heart
Wakes to behold the void within—and start!
To feel its own abandonment, and brood
O'er the chill bosom's depth of solitude.
Comest thou to weep with me? for I am left
Alone on earth, of every tie bereft!

MRS. HEMANS.

UGH! how coldly the winter winds sweep, and howl, and wail, around the corners and in the leafless groves! How they whine at the doors, and surge through the valleys and woodlands, plowing up the brown leaves into furrows and drifts, shrieking in the bending tree-tops, and sobbing among the pines! Oh, what a stern-browed old monarch is the winter-king! No wonder the shivering poor huddle together, and dread even the fearful pomp that heralds his coming! But we anticipate.

In the outskirts of Glen Green, in a barren, rocky field,

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with a few scattered fruit trees about it, stood an old log cabin, so old, and mossy, and mouldy, that middle-aged men in Glen Green remembered climbing the mud walls inside, to feel into swallows' nests upon the rafters; in their boyhood. It was called a haunted house, and tradition said that, long ago, a man had built it and moved there; that the family consisted of a wife and one child—the offspring of a former marriage. The story ran that the woman was a step-mother, who hated the little girl, and, in the absence of the father, she struck her on the head with a hammer and killed her, burying her under the puncheon floor. That they immediately disappeared, and the house was ever after haunted by the cries of a dying child; the cries growing fainter and weaker until they were hushed in death.

No person ever tried to live in the cabin except Mrs. Jones's son-in-law, who fixed up the house quite comfortable, and moved; but they only staid in it one night, and then they nearly smothered themselves sleeping with their pillows over their faces.

Mrs. Jones's daughter heard something in the night like a knock on the head; then a dull, heavy sound followed, "just, for all the world like a child that had been struck and fell on the floor." The cat had pushed a sack of large red onions from the upper shelf, but she didn't believe that was it at all, "for onions wouldn't knock like a child falling."

Since then, the old house had been suffered to fall to ruin; the flag-stones about the door had grown over with moss, and nettles had sprung up rankly between them. A great green thistle bristled up angrily against the sunken door-sill, and creeping ivy climbed up the rude stick chimney, and

swung from the old brown eaves. The hearth-stones were torn up by the mischievous boys, hunting ground-squirrels, and the puncheon floor thrown into a pile by the superstitious persons who had dug underneath, searching for the poor child's bones. Swallows' nests were stuck about in the wide chimney and over the walls, and glued on to the rafters and above the door, and the fragment of roof that still clung to one corner of the house, sheltered the nightly repose of an old gray hawk.

But, one day in the autumn, a strange man drove up to the cabin in a wagon, with a load of clapboards, a little basket of nails, a hammer and saw, and, unhitching and tying his horses to the back end of the wagon, came and took a survey of the gloomy old cabin. He shook the door-posts, felt about the windows, peeped up the chimney, and all about it, and scratching his head, moodily said: "It's a pretty hard case, but I guess I can make it do for the poor creeters. It's been a well put-up house in the first place; the corners stand pretty firm yet, though it's got a little twisted with old age."

"Think we can make it do, Jacob?" said he, as another man came up, who had probably got out to walk in the Glen.

"It looks hard now," said Jacob, spitting the brown saliva all over the peerless thistle in the door-way, "but we can make it a mighty sight more comfortable for winter than this is, and the sooner we get at it the sooner we will get done;" and they went to work roofing the cabin. They worked hard and busy, and that day they got the roof on, the puncheon floor put down, the hearth laid decently again, and a fine bed of mortar made to daub the walls—this job they roughly com-

pleted before they left that night, which was not until long after dark.

The next day, about noon, the same wagon drove up again; but this time it was filled with furniture and household goods. Two women sat down in among the bedding. One about thirty years of age, with a pale, haggard face; a hopeless, despairing expression was in all her movements and in her countenance. The other was young, not more than eighteen, with a light, clear complexion, blue eyes, and a cheerful, hopeful, happy mien.

While one of the men and the girl took the things out of the wagon, the other man tore away the old chimney, and nailed heavy boards over the aperture, which gave the cabin a look of modern times.

"Oh! how dreary!" sighed the woman, as she sat in a chair, the very picture of despair.

"Why no, Ethel! I can paste papers over these walls, and hang up pictures; and when the carpet is down, and every thing fixed up neat, I'd rather, far, live here, than at uncle Bradford's beautiful residence, attended by a retinue of servants. I think I shall not have much mercy on these old pioneers, Sirs Thistle and Nettle, frowning and bristling up as they do in the door there!"

A little cooking-stove was put up on the old hearth, two bedsteads in the two far corners, a few chairs brought in, with a table, cupboard, stand, sofa, writing desk, and trunks. A pile of carpeting lay ready to put down as soon as the floor had been washed.

"Cousin John, I do thank you sincerely for your kindness,"

said Julia, the girl, taking the man's hand at parting, "and I am sorry you will not accept a recompense."

"Oh, don't thank me, Juliar, for what I've done," said he, growing red in the face; "I'm rale sorry I can't leave you fixed more like comfort, and among friends. I hope God will bless you both, Juliar!"

"Farewell, cousin Ethel! you must try and be as happy and pert as you can, and look for better days—God be with you, Ethel!"

"Good bye, John," said the woman, without rising. When the wagon rattled away out of sight, and could not be heard any longer, Ethel burst into tears and cried hysterically. Julia talked low soft words of cheer until she grew calm and lay down on the sofa to rest, after the long ride.

The men had cleaned out a fine spring under a rocky bank; and, while Ethel slept, Julia scrubbed the floor and arranged the furniture, and put down the carpet, which gave a cheerful home-look to the room. Then she pasted paper all over the walls, and hung up pictures; and that night, as they sat by the little tea-table, no one would have recognized the old wreck of a cabin in that snug, clean, tasteful room.

Ethel and Julia Clarke were the only surviving children of a large family. They were born in the south part of New Hampshire. When Ethel, the eldest, was sixteen, their parents were swept off with the cholera. They were left destitute. The two remaining brothers were adopted into respectable families, and Julia, the babe, was taken by her aunt Bradford to her home in Keene.

Ethel also lived in Keene, learning dress-making and millinery. But troubles came. She was a very beautiful, attrac-

tive girl; confiding and affectionate. She loved—not wisely, but too well! Her shame was more than she could bear! Even her rich aunt, with whom Julia resided, spurned her from her presence, at the dead hour of night, while imprecations fell upon her young head! Her companions turned aside from her—there were none to speak kind words; no, not one! She could not obtain employment. Her proud spirit was chafing—pierced through by the cold iron of despair! Only one resort was there—one shelter for her bowed head; and blame her not if, in her utter anguish, she was driven—without seeking—to that last alternative. She fell! sinking lower and lower, until her fair name had become a by-word and a shame among women.

*Judge not, unless thy lip can tell
What wily tempters, fierce and strong,
Did the unguarded soul propel
To ruin's hidden gulf along!*

Julia had been taught to despise her, and when they met in the street, the blooming young maiden and the pale, woe-stricken woman, Julia dared not recognize her. Her aunt and acquaintances called her Julia Bradford, and it seemed for two years that all ties of relationship were broken asunder.

At the end of this time, Julia's eldest brother died and was buried in Keene. He was a youth of rare promise, and his death was deeply lamented. Julia asked her aunt if it would not be proper to inform Ethel of his death, remarking that it might have a good influence over her, for she so loved their brother Edgar.

"You might as well go out into the street and inform the meanest scavenger you could find. What is Ethel to us, that she need care for the death of your brother? Remember your social position, Julia Bradford, and what the world has a right to expect of you."

When the funeral procession entered the spacious cemetery in Keene, a tall figure, dressed in black, with a mourning veil sweeping to the ground, stood not far away, leaning against a weeping willow. The long, pliant branches hung around her, like waving curtains of emerald trailing about her feet—a mournfully touching picture. She stood still as a statue until the procession had left the cemetery, when she moved slowly away, and throwing herself upon the grave, flung her arms across it and wept bitterly over her hard fate, plaining sorrowfully because there were none to love her, the fallen, homeless and weary of life.

After Julia's aunt had retired to her room, she stole out and went back to the cemetery. The picture of the figure in black, standing among the trailing willows, was before her all the time, and she could not close her eyes to shut it out. She went to the grave, and sat down beside the mourning one.

"My dear sister, I have come to ask for your love and confidence, and to pour my earnest sympathy into your bleeding heart," said Julia, as she gathered the poor, tear-stained face close to her bosom.

"Oh, Julia! I am hungering, starving for sympathy—dying by inches; yet none before have ever offered it to me. I thank you for it; but you must leave me and go back. I would starve to death rather than be the means of your incurring aunt's displeasure. Oh! I am so glad you are happy and

beloved, and have no stain resting upon your white soul. But leave me now, lest aunt learn that we have been together."

"Ethel, my dear sister, don't you love me? don't you want me with you? Would you not leave this place, if I would go with you away off among strangers?"

"Oh, Julia! if I could be near you, and hear you talk, and feel your blessed influence flung around me, I could grow worthy of the name of sister,

As the stained web that whitens in the sun
Grows pure by being purely shone upon.

And yet—I will accept no sacrifice of you. You shall make none for me."

The sisters talked long and earnestly. Julia was a successful pleader, and before they parted that evening, the plan was made, and they were to go to cousin John's, in Massachusetts, and consult with him about their both beginning life anew, in another phase, toils and struggles and honest poverty.

When Julia went home and told her aunt where she had been, and the determination she had come to, the proud woman almost choked with anger at the ingratitude and baseness of Julia. After she had vented her rage in censure and unkind expletives, she began weeping hysterically, calling Julia her dear child, and entreating her to consider well her position in society, the rich promise of her womanhood, the number of her suitors, the wealth of her uncle, and the certain heirship if she continued with them as their own child.

"If you link your destiny with her blackened career, you had better be a pensioner on public charity, than live the blighted life you will be obliged to. She never can win re-

spect among our class, and you will, even though your life be pure and offered as a sacrifice for her restoration—you will be spurned by all worthy people. Oh, Julia! reflect; it is not too late. Ethel would not do as much for you."

"Aunt Linda, you cannot persuade me. 'The light has come, and I see.' I will not give up my sister. I believe her soul is pure, and what a woman's soul is, she is, even if she may have wandered away from the right. Oh! I felt as if I could have died for her, while she clung around my neck, and told me she never would have fallen, only she was goaded on to despair by the scorn of all who knew her. She had not a place else to lay her head, and not one word of sympathy was offered her. She said if any good woman had taken her hand, and prayed for and pitied her, and given her work to do, she had never, never fallen. She said no one cared for her soul, and she had nothing on earth to live for.

"Oh, aunt Linda! I wish all women could wash their hands of the grief and despair and anguish and suicide their cold looks and haughty mien have brought upon their weak sisters. I wish they could more readily throw the mantle of charity over their faults, and by kind words of sympathy, freshen into a glow, and bring out brightly of the sweet qualities that cluster in the souls of the unjustly condemned.

"Aunt, I do believe you had fallen, too, even as Ethel did, had the same train of temptations been laid in wait for your unwary steps. Oh! it is an easy thing for you or me to stand, held up by divine goodness, gathering our white robes about us lest they be sullied, while scorn and calumny and envy and malice and hatred are like pointed bayonets all around us, ready to pierce us whichever way we turn or fall. And

because we do not be tempted and weakly fall, we dare to stand up, as in power and might, and denounce those whose feet have slipped into pitfalls, forgetting to give God the thanks and praise. My heart bleeds that I ever, through false views, was led to spurn my dear Ethel, and pass her in the streets as a stranger. You taught me that, aunt Linda. Forgive me for the fancied slight I show your charity, as I forgive you for teaching me to spurn the sister who nursed at the same breast I did—was led in beautiful paths by the same mother-hand, and taught the same sweet lessons of love to God and man. Oh, my dear aunt! we have both greatly erred. May God look forgivingly upon us, and may this life, that I now devote to the happiness and restoration of my poor Ethel, be made acceptable to God, and more worthy than it ever has been before."

"What will you do to earn a livelihood, Julia?" asked her aunt, as she leaned her head sorrowfully on her hand.

"Dear aunt, I will turn into usefulness all these accomplishments you and uncle have so generously bestowed upon me. I can teach music, and painting, and embroidery; and can teach school, or sew, or do whatever my hands find to do. Ethel is very expert with her needle, and a good miliner, too, and I know we shall make a nice living; and then Ethel will grow to be so happy; and I will feel as if I had got into a new world, when I have no servants to run at my bidding, and the very important item of shopping is dispensed with. I hope we will get away off into the country, where no person has ever heard the name of Clarke, and where we can live without seeing fashionable people and being bored with calls. Oh, auntie, this life in Keene is so hollow and unreal, it all seems

aimless and artificial! I mean to do all the good I can, and be sociable, and love every body. Shall I write to you, aunt Linda?"

"Oh, yes; you don't expect because you give me up for Ethel, that I shall give you up entirely? I do feel sorry for her, and if it was not for the prior claims which our high position in society has on me, I would be willing to take her in here. She could sew for us, and help in the kitchen, and save us a good deal; besides, it would be raising her to respectability somewhat. But these claims and demands are so stern and unyielding, I would not run the risk of putting them to the test. Now, if I could only keep her, and no one know it—" and her face brightened at the suggestive thought.

"No, no, auntie!" said Julia, rising and patting her face, and laughing strangely at the poor woman, who was such a captive in the bonds of society, "you will not think of any plan to interfere with my plans, and of our journey to cousin John's to-morrow. What a good, honest boy he was!—I long to see him, and hope he is just as good a man as his boyhood promised."

Julia packed her trunks, that night, with her clothes and books, and all her little possession. Her uncle with tears gave her a purse, and told her if she was ever in need, or wished to come back, to send him word, and all the means she required should be forthcoming.

The next morning, after a tender farewell, Julia left the kind home that had sheltered her orphan childhood, and found Ethel waiting for her at the depot.

On their arrival at cousin John's, she was delighted to find him all she had hoped and anticipated, except that he was not

in very good circumstances. Poverty, the good poor man's companion, had kept near him always.

He it was who bore them to the humble cabin in Glen Green, as the pleasantest retreat he could suggest.

Ethel's hard experience had made her gloomy and morose; but that first night in the cabin-home, she resolved to call out all the sunshine in her heart, and be happy, and help to reconcile Julia to the change in her mode of life; while Julia, herself, bravely resolved to be cheerful, and trust in God for the good results of her daring scheme.

It was mid-winter, and the little wood-pile at the cabin-door was nearly gone; and, for a time, the spirits even of Julia were cast down. It was so hard to economize and procure the bare necessities of life, with one who had always been accustomed to luxury and plenty!

Ethel was quite happy—though her heart was broken never to be healed, only in heaven! While the winds were sweeping without, and the snow drifting and piling up against the cabin, Ethel sat near the stove, rocking in the easy chair, and intently reading her Bible.

"Oh! what sweet promises He gives to the repentant and the erring! I wonder that in those hours of darkness I did not flee to this book! Oh! there was not one—God forgive them!—who pointed out to me the thief on the cross, or the poor Magdalene, to whom he sweetly spoke, saying, 'Neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more.' Oh! when I wandered, houseless, and homeless, and friendless, if I had

known and felt the love and mercy as I now do, I had never rushed so blindly and hopelessly downward as I did! I felt then there was no one on my side—none to speak of pity and forgiveness!”

“Oh, Ethel, I am afraid we shall freeze to death!” said Julia, looking out from the window over the dreary, snow-covered waste, to the distance where the white-crowned pines loomed gloomily above the rugged cliffs.

“I had forgotten it was winter, Julia,” said Ethel, laying her book in her lap, and looking up to her sister; “it is all summer with me now—my night and my winter are gone!” and her face lit up with a look of the old girlish beauty of long ago, blended with a sweet spiritual expression.

“Oh, Ethel, ain’t you glad we came here?—we have been so happy! I can’t see how I ever endured life in the idle, aimless, unloving way I used to live in Keene!”

“Yes, Julia, I have lived more of real, earnest, true life in these few months in this good, quiet place, than I ever lived in all the years gone by. I have only you to bless for the change; you brought redemption to me—and I do hope you may never feel it to have been a sacrifice.”

“Never, Ethel; and but for the death of our dear brother, this change had never come to either of us. How true it is, that blessings oftenest come in the disguise of afflictions—the deeper the sorrow, the richer the blessing!”

Just then, a stamping of spry feet at the door, and a rap, startled the women in their conversation.

Cicely Lisle came in, well muffled, to protect herself from the cold. She had brought a piece of crimson velvet, to make Alice a hood, and a pattern of a cloak for herself. She had

never been there but twice before, and had promised to bring them some sewing.

Ethel thanked her for her kindness, and timidly asked her, when the work was done, if she was pleased with it, if she would not recommend her to others of her neighbors who had sewing to do. Cicely replied that she would do it with pleasure. She had observed the scanty supply of wood, and she casually remarked that it was a cold day for a woman to venture away from home, but that Mr. Lisle was hauling wood all the forenoon, and he didn’t seem to mind the cold; and then she asked if he had not better haul them a load while he was at such work.

That took a heavy burden off Julia’s mind, and she gratefully assented to the offer on condition that they might work for pay.

Cicely said that it would be a great accommodation to them, and there was another item she would mention in which they could render her a favor.

“We have killed more hogs than we need, and there is always a surplus of spareribs, backbones, hearts, tongues, feet and sausage—more than we can possibly save for our own use, and if you will accept what we don’t need, it will be doing us a kindness,” said Cicely, half in fear of offending the gentle, lady-like Julia.

“Why, we do thank you, my good woman,” said Julia, her eyes sparkling with honest delight.

“I am very glad,” replied Cicely; “for I did so dread to ask you; because one time I sent a poor widow a basketful of such odd favors, and she took it as an insult, and sent it back to me, saying she wouldn’t live on what rich people threw away.”

"She did not face her poverty as honestly as Julia and I do, did she, jewel?" said Ethel, laughing.

"No, indeed; for I am willing to do any kind of work, even if it be piling stone in the meadows for farmers, or watching the crows away from the corn-fields," replied Julia, "and I will take my pay in meat, flour, salt, soap, butter, or any thing we have to use in housekeeping. I have thought of trying to get a class of girls to instruct in embroidery—do you think I shall succeed, if I undertake it, Mrs. Lisle?"

"Oh, yes; I think there would be no difficulty in obtaining ten or twelve girls. I shall be very glad to have you teach Alice."

Cicely had not been home more than two hours, until Mr. Lisle drove up to the cabin with a load of wood, on which was a half barrel of the favors Cicely had asked them to accept. A dozen heads of cabbage lay in the hind part of the wagon, and a basket of beets and apples, a little sack of dried peaches, a pail of cranberries, and a cake of maple sugar, in another basket, in the fore end of the wagon.

"Cicely said our family was so small we could never use all these things, and you would please her by accepting them."

He unloaded his wood by the door, and piled it up neatly; then drove home and soon brought another. This time Cicely sent a pail of mince-meat, ready to bake into pies, that she had forgotten to send the first time.

"She made this on purpose for you," said he; "it was no trouble at all, while she was making for ourselves, to make a little more to give to a good neighbor."

"I do wonder if these Clarkes are any relation to the Clarkes in Wellesly, husband?" said Mrs. Phillips to the parson, one Sabbath evening, after they had returned from church, in the early spring-time.

"I don't know; but it really does seem to me the younger one looks like William Clarke did, when he was a young man; you remember, wife, he had a very fair complexion, and handsome, mild, dreamy eyes—he always looked to me as if he had a poet's eye in his head."

"Well, this Julia has just such soft, dreamy eyes, but when she laughs, how they do flash and sparkle! I know I should love that girl if I were acquainted with her. The other one looks as if she had suffered a great deal; when she first came to church, her face wore such a soul-sick, hopeless expression, it made my heart ache to look at her; but I observe of late a resigned sweetness of countenance."

"I saw her to-day trying to hide her emotion, while I was dwelling on the great compassion and love of Christ; the tears would come stealing down her cheeks, in spite of her efforts at calmness," said the pastor.

"Yes, and I saw her one time, not long since, while you were talking of the wickedness of the world, and the deception and lack of true charity, and of the balm that Christ's promises brought to the tried, and persecuted, and broken-hearted—oh, I saw her whole form shaking with emotion, and I thought once her sobs would break out aloud, poor creature!" said Mrs. Phillips; "we ought to have called on them long since, and made their acquaintance; we might have done them some good, both in a worldly and spiritual point of view."

"I am ashamed to confess it, wife, but the real truth is,

there are so few really just and charitable members in my church, that I am afraid to visit the poor girls, for fear of giving offense to those who sustain me in the ministry here! I do confess it before God, and you, my wife, that I do not dare to live out what I believe to be a perfectly correct and blameless life in the sight of my Maker, just in dread of these prim, self-righteous people! If I break the shackles and stand up free, to do and say and act what I believe to be right, I should bring their displeasure down upon me, and the result would be that I should lose the privilege of officiating longer in this large and wealthy church. I have already trembled in fear, sometimes, lest I had gone too far in saying what they might not approve."

"*Privilege!* Allen, Allen! I think every minister of the gospel ought to live out what he believes to be the purest and highest principles, and the most acceptable in the sight of God, no matter what the rich and aristocratic members of the church may dictate in the lives they lead themselves. I do not approve of one's being led about by the policy that makes him untrue to the better teachings of a noble and generous nature; seeking to win the good opinion of this one, and holding back frank, true sentiments in the presence of another, with whom he knew such ideas would be unpopular. It was not into the keeping of such a man I gave my affections a third of a century ago, was it, Allen?" and the good woman looked pleasantly up into his face, although no smile was on her lip.

He laughed, and said half-sorrowfully, "You know, Mattie, that circumstances make the man's destiny."

How quick she flashed out, "No, no! I don't know it, and

I won't believe it! I should be very sorry to believe man was such a simple tool, that he would allow circumstances to affect his principles of right and wrong. You would have man like rotten drift-wood on the waves, or helpless as the dough in Molly's hands, which she can mould into round, long, or square loaves, or no loaves at all, just as she pleases. You would have him succumb to circumstances, sit down and fold his hands, and yield. I say a man should make his own destiny, or as much of it as lies in his own province. God gave him a strong will; you would have him drop it at his feet, as a child would a toy, instead of standing up manfully and battling for the right, and nerving his strong arm, and trusting in Him who has said, 'I will never forsake thee!' You are too noble a man to be wheedled about by the falsely grounded opinions of a set of people whom a false estimate of life has rendered unworthy of being looked up to as an authority;" and the blue veins in her forehead swelled up like tensioned chords. She was excited. There had never, in all their wedded life, been so much of a difference in opinion before.

"Well, well, Mattie, we won't talk about this any more; we will do as near right as we can—"

"No, no, Allen! we will do as near right as we *know how to do!* won't we?" said the wife, laying her hand on his arm interruptingly.

"We will visit all the members of the church, and then go around and call on the Misses Clarke, and be social," said he, coaxingly, as he laughed, and, smoothing her hair, left the room.

"I shall write 'To be continued,' at the end of this chapter,

or matrimonial tiff, or whatever it is, husband," said she, as he left the house."

He turned half around and shook his head, and she saw he was not displeased.

"Mother is always right in every thing—the true elements of undefiled religion have been hers from her cradle, and she will bear them untarnished to the end of her life. Contact with a hard, unjust world, will only polish her jewels brighter, and fit them for a glorious setting in heaven," was his soliloquy.

In a few days the parson and his wife rode over to William Lisle's, and spent the afternoon, and staid till after an early tea. Cicely had always been a great favorite with them, and they loved her very much. They saw from the demeanor of Alice, that perfect love united her and her step-mother, and that she was being religiously brought up.

In the course of conversation Cicely alluded to the poor widow and children, and inquired after their welfare. Then it came that the pastor asked her why she had not been at the party, made expressly for the widow, at the parsonage. She replied that she had heard since, the invitation written for her had got lost before it came to her hands; but it was of little consequence, as she could just as easily send her donation, only that she was debarred the pleasure of meeting her neighbors in a social manner. There was no unkind allusion made to Mrs. Lee. The parson's wife observed it, and it only strengthened her good opinion of Cicely, as a Christian and a model woman.

"I believe you are somewhat acquainted with the Misses Clarke, are you not, Cicely?" asked Mr. Phillips.

"Oh, yes; we are very good friends," was the reply. "I esteem them both as excellent women."

"Do you know anything of their former circumstances, or where they came from?"

"They are from New Hampshire, but I know nothing further. They never told me, and I felt a little delicate about inquiring."

"We expect to visit all through the Glen, and design calling on them too. I am inclined to believe their father was an acquaintance of ours long ago. Some people look suspicious upon them; but I think they are not aware of it, and I hope they will never find it out," said he.

"Does Mrs. Lee call on them, or Mrs. Whitfield, or Dr. Hammond's wife, or Mrs. Harper?" asked Mrs. Phillips.

"None of those, I believe, except Mrs. Harper. She came over from Wendall the other day with a bundle of fine sewing and embroidery, and two silk bonnets for Ethel to make," said Cicely.

"Mrs. Harper is a charming woman. She is one who will do what her conscience tells her is right, even though 'our set' should behead her the next minute," said Mrs. Phillips, earnestly.

"I saw Ethel making the bonnets. One is for Mrs. Harper, a plain brown silk, trimmed with black lace; the other is for her friend, Kate Wheaton, a girl who used to live with her, a beautiful, intelligent Irish girl, named Kathleen—perhaps you remember her, Mrs. Phillips?"

"A handsome blonde, as quick as a bird in her movements, very neat and tasteful in her dress? I have often wondered what became of her."

"Well, she went to York State, to live with the doctor's sister, and married well up there. Her bonnet is to be a present, when she comes to visit them this spring. It is to be made of white silk, and ruchings of narrow blonde, and trimmed with an elegant ruche, and white marabouts on one side and three bunches of pink rose-buds on the other, and a delicate spray is to fall lightly and gracefully down over the cape—the brides or strings to be of the widest and best white satin ribbon.

"The ladies of Wendall are all anger and excitement about it; but they cannot harm Mrs. Harper by anything they can say or do. She is a lady who stands above reproach, and out of the reach of common gossip. They might as well shame the evening star by pointing their fingers at it." And Cicely and Mrs. Phillips both laughed at the imperturbable spirit of the woman who dared shake her head in defiance of the laws of "our set."

The next day Julia sat writing a letter to her aunt Bradford, and Ethel was finishing Mrs. Harper's bonnet, when the parson and his wife drove up to the door. They were surprised and pleased with the call. Julia ran out and assisted them to alight, and ushered them into their humble home. By the time they had got into the house, Julia and Mrs. Phillips were chatting like old friends.

"Oh! it don't seem possible this is that old tumble-down cabin, that always stood like a frightful spectre away in the barren field," said the honest, blunt old parson, as he looked down at the neat carpeted floor, the clean papered walls, and the table of choice books, which stood in the room. A painting, a rare old gem of the first water, hung between the

windows. It was of the Last Supper, and its perfect harmony throughout, won his admiration. It was just what one of correct taste and sublime ideality would imagine that scene to have portrayed. Another picture, a steel engraving, called "Rewarded," was touchingly beautiful. It represented a fair, young girl, habited in a robe of black. Tears stood on her cheeks; the world had dealt harshly with her, since her motherless years had come; and in the agony of her betrayed and blighted womanhood, she had sought her mother's grave and wept until, weary and exhausted, she had fallen asleep. The round, white arm leaned on the bent, gray tombstone, and her head was bowed upon it. Floating in the air above her, with flowing drapery and furled wings, was an angel, pointing upwards with the left hand, while the right one was softly letting down a radiant crown of glory upon the fair mourner's head.

"Beautiful!" said the old man with enthusiasm, "the artist has told the story plainer than words could have expressed it; for no language could have given it this high tone of expression."

"My dear sister Ethel," was written under it, in a graceful, flowing, feminine hand. A pencil mark had been drawn across the tender words twice or thrice, but they were not wholly defaced. The pastor observed, as Julia pointed out the natural repose of the full, rounded limbs, she allowed her finger to rest on the written words, so as to hide them from his observation.

"I was formerly from Ellersly, New Hampshire, and was well acquainted with several families of Clarkes there, and my wife and self both think we can see a strong family re-

semblance in you, Miss Julia, to one William Clarke, a son of Martin Clarke's," said Mr. Phillips.

"William Clarke was our father," said Julia, exhibiting more of embarrassment than interest.

"Ah! I told Mr. Phillips you had the very same meek, dreamy eyes that William had," remarked Mrs. Phillips.

"Are your parents living?"

"They both died within a fortnight of each other, of the cholera. We were left orphaned at an early age," said Ethel, sorrowfully.

"Our brothers are dead, too; just Ethel and I left. The memories of home and of our lost parents were painful, and as we were thrown upon the world to earn a living, it seemed better for us both to seek it in another place, where there were no unhappy remembrances to cling to us with a saddening influence," said Julia, hoping to satisfy curiosity and change the theme.

"God has blessed us bountifully since we came here," said Ethel, smiling. "We have had plenty to do, and found a few dear friends in Glen Green; but best of all, God has seemed nearer to us here, and has led us to taste more largely of His love. Last winter was a dreary and cold time without, but to me it was like a summer, crowned with blessings. I have drank deeply of sorrow, but the tears I shed have sprang up bearing a tenfold happiness. How hard it is to learn to trust God, and in cheerful resignation to say, '*It is well.*'"

Unconsciously had Ethel turned the conversation into a channel both pleasing to the pastor and profitable to all of them. Long and animated was the converse between them;

and Mr. Phillips found to his joy that Ethel was indeed one of those who had felt the pardoning mercy of the Saviour.

"Have you a letter from any church?" he inquired.

"I have never united myself with any," was the reply. "I never felt that I could give the requirements the church demands, until lately."

"Would you feel it a privilege to unite with the church in Glen Green?"

"A precious privilege and a duty," was the answer.

"I will lay the case before the church at the next meeting," he replied, and he moved his chair nearer the table, and took up a volume of poetry, and opened at "Willis's Sacred Poems."

"Ah! there's been a bee here, sipping of the delicious sweets, mother," said he, as he pointed out to his wife a piece marked with pencil, "Hagar in the Wilderness."

Julia prepared tea, while Ethel entertained the visitors.

When they started home, Julia made him accept of the painting he had so enthusiastically admired, "The Last Supper." She said it was so appropriate for the study of a minister. In place of it, she hung up one, called "Mother's Darling," a little, rosy, rollicking cherub of a baby boy, with the clustering curls about his neck and forehead, and his plump form only half concealed by a little shirt that had slipped off one shoulder.

"What charming girls they are," said Mrs. Phillips, as they rode home in the soft twilight.

"I don't see how people can help loving them," said the pastor. "What an artless, innocent, yet intelligent child-woman Julia is. Frank would love that girl, if he could only

meet with her. It is a pity that circumstances are not a little different with them. Some folks are so fastidiously nice, they think it discreditable for women to live alone as they do, and maintain themselves by honest, humble industry."

"Oh! there are no such people in our neighborhood," responded the wife.

"Oh! yes; plenty, plenty of them. Those who 'strain at a gnat and swallow a camel,' would question the propriety of associating with these two good girls, and would certainly object to receiving Ethel into the church."

"Oh! I do hope not, husband," said Mrs. Phillips, in painful surprise and saddened tones.

"We shall see," was the quiet rejoinder.

CHAPTER XV.

Have I not had to wrestle with my lot?
Have I not suffered things to be forgiven?
Have I not had my brain seared, my brain riven,
Hopes sapped, name blighted, life's life fled away?

BYRON

Like to the Pontic monarch of old days,
He fed on poisons, and they had no power,
But were a kind of nutriment.

BYRON.

MR. HOWLAND sat in the parlor of his cousin, Mrs. Whitfield, conversing with her in a low voice.

"Jennie is too sensitive," the lady remarked. "She is so ready to believe all she hears, and so easily imposed upon. I have often thought, cousin, that she inherits a morbid sensibility from her mother. You remember she was one of those tender-hearted, gentle creatures, as ready to weep over the sorrows of others, as her own; and her hand was always open to the poor and unfortunate. Such an organization is a very unfortunate one."

"I could easily bear all this; but to see her seek out the low-bred and ignorant and illiterate, and visit their homes, is more than I can well bear. It is bringing herself upon an

equality with the lower classes, and is a stain upon the name of Howland," said Jennie's father.

"I heard Metta say, not a fortnight ago, that she was afraid Jennie would sometime form an *alliance* that would bring your head in sorrow to the grave. Hamilton thought a great deal of her; did you know it?" said Mrs. Whitfield.

"I was not aware of it," said he, looking down; "he was a young man of promise; where is he now?"

"You must tell Jane," said she laughing. "I want her to know it. When Hamilton went to Michigan, he found the estate of his mother involved; the case was taken into a court of chancery, and through the invalidity of some title deeds, she lost it, and they were left without a home. There are two children, not old enough to earn a living, and he had to give up his studies, and go to work to support the family. They moved into the pineries in Michigan, and he is now getting out lumber and rafting it; and has very materially changed his position in society."

"Poor James! I am sorry for him; but I think if he had properly appreciated his standing, and put it at its real value, he would not have flung it away so easily, for the sake of an old woman, in her dotage, perhaps, who cannot estimate the sacrifice."

"Oh, what a fall!—from reading law to rafting lumber!" said Mr. Howland.

"I told the girls they need not answer the last letter they received," continued Mrs. Whitfield; "for he should surely have known we would not correspond with him now. Oh, did you hear of the accident which befell Laura! Met and her were out riding, (that's all the fashion in the cities now,) and

they were galloping up the tow-path, when Lot's horse, (it's a little lame and stiff in its hind legs,) it slipped, and before it could gain its balance, Lot fell off backwards into the canal, and struck on her head in the mud, and went under, out of sight. Just as she rose the second time, the Count de Riviere sprang in and rescued her. Oh! it was just as nice as a novel, Metta said. He carried her out and rubbed her hands, and acted like one distracted, until she revived. Indeed, I shouldn't wonder if it would terminate after the fashion of a novel. He calls every day to see her now; but she is quite well; so it is not because he fears she is in danger that he drops in, ha! ha!"

Just then, Metta came sweeping into the room, rustling in a fashionable brocade, and looking very significantly at her mother.

"Is there any person in the room with Laura?"

"The Count," was the reply, and she sat down and giggled like a gawky girl.

"Why, Metta, try and respect cousin, if you can't your own mother," said Mrs. Whitfield, curtly. But Metta leaned her head down on the table and tittered the more.

"Oh, ma, it seems as if I should die a'laughing, every time I think about Lot's being rescued! I wish Punch had the picture I have in my mind. You see, cousin Howland, when the horse slipped his hind legs down into the canal, to save his life he couldn't get them back again; there they stuck, as stiff as two pieces of scantling; and instead of Lot climbing off over his head, as she should, she squalled out like a wild goose, and flinging out both arms, dropped down into the canal, striking her head into the black mud, and if it had killed her, I'd had

to laugh. I caught a glimpse of her face just as she poked it up out of the mud, and if it had killed me, and if I'd been hung the next minute, I could not have kept in from laughing. Her hat was jammed down upon her head, the brim quite straightened out, touching her shoulders and neck behind; the plume hung like a beaver's tail dripping with mire, and such a streaked and grimy face you never saw in your life, while she was sputtering the mud out of her mouth. She could have stood up easy—the water was not deep—but she sunk down like lead. When the Count sprang in after her, he forgot to throw his cigar out of his mouth, but held it close in his teeth all the time. On the whole, it was just about as much as I could bear and live," and she held her hands on her sides, and laughed immoderately.

"Well, it will do well enough to laugh over in the family, or among relations," said her mother, "but pray, Metta, don't for the world talk this way before Kate Barnes, or any of the other girls—it would be capital sport for them."

"Never fear, mother, of my telling it to injure Lot, or take the romance out of the incident. I am very glad it happened, now that it has turned out so pleasantly."

When Mr. Howland was on his return home, he saw Jennie walking across the fields in the direction of Glen Green. It instantly occurred to him to watch and see where she was going.

There were not more than two or three families in the Glen whom he permitted her to visit, and if she ever did call on them, it was not because they were congenial, for her sympathies and theirs did not harmonize.

How the angry blood did flush his brow, when he saw her

strike through the woods that lay just below the home of Ethel and Julia. Was it possible she meant to call on those poor women! Strangers as they were, and without characters of a year's standing even, in that place! Ah, had the time come in which the last alternative must be resorted to?

He could not persuade her into submission—he must force her!

"It is but little matter what becomes of her," he repeated to himself; "she is a strange, self-willed, obstinate child, and must be harshly dealt with. The will that dares rise up in rebellion to a father, must be severely treated."

The idea of a new course of treatment had been in his thoughts some time, yet he delayed putting it into practice. That was, to give general circulation to the report that Jennie was crazy, brought on by an over-nervous and excitable organization.

He watched, and saw her enter the cabin with a parcel in her hand. He sat an hour or two, watching the door, and waiting for her to come out, on her return home.

During this time his anger rose to boiling heat. He cursed his fate, that his name must go down to the grave with him—that his child had not been a son, who could transmit the good old English name to an appreciative posterity, and that he might live for centuries yet to come, in a name upon the earth.

What an unholy ambition!—not to live in posterity for good deeds done, or for perils undergone for one's beloved country, but merely for the sound of the name, as fleeting as the tinkle of a bell, or the smoke that uprises in wreaths from a cottage chimney.

At last, he could restrain his anger no longer, and rising, he

paced backwards and forwards along the bank of the brook that wound through the woods below the cabin.

"Poor Jane! she has sealed her own doom, and now she must incur the results of her obstinacy and pride!" he said, as he straightened his erect form and walked hastily to the door. As he neared it, a laugh rang out musically, and fell soothingly upon his ear as a chime of merry bells.

It was Julia, in one of her over-sportive and merry moods.

Jennie was momentarily startled at the sight of her father; but only for an instant, for she bowed gracefully, and introduced her father and the Misses Clarke.

He stammered, "I was surprised to see you coming here alone, Jane."

"Oh, I preferred walking, papa. I brought a dress for Miss Ethel to fit and make."

"I do not like to have Miss Howland walk out alone, ladies. I presume you are aware of the painful fact, that study and an acute sensitive and nervous organization have seriously impaired her mind, and that it is proper to exercise a due degree of watchfulness over her conduct. And yet she often steals out and wanders wherever her steps lead her."

Both Ethel and Julia were touched with pity for the poor girl, whose face grew as white as the dead, while her eyes glared strangely, pleadingly, upon her father—her pallid lips parted, and only the moaning word, "*father!*" "*father!*" fell painfully from them, as though a sudden pain in her heart prevented further speech.

"Poor girl, I love you so!" said the pitying Julia, as gathering her arms about her and folding her to her bosom, she slid down upon her knees beside her.

Then did Jennie's gathering flood of tears break forth. It was the relief that came to her aid and saved her.

"It is not a hopeless case of insanity, Mr. Howland—the expression of her countenance seems to show a well balanced intellect. Oh! that mind is a gem above all price, but the casket is very frail—the burning burden within has shattered it," said Ethel, speaking in a low tone, that Jennie might not hear.

"I wish, Mr. Howland, you had not told us in her presence—it had been better if she had not heard; for she cannot survive many such shocks as this has been."

"I am aware it is not always commendable to mention the fact of a derangement of reason in the presence of the unfortunate ones, but in this instance I have found it proper. It exerts a good influence over her to remind her of it occasionally; for she is very willful—so obstinate that I find great difficulty in subduing her strong will by reason, kindness, or any conciliatory means," said Mr. Howland.

"I wish it were possible for her to be with Julia some of the time; for she is so cheerful and happy, always, and her joyous spirits are contagious," said Ethel, in all the goodness of her womanly nature.

"You may not be advised of Miss Howland's standing in society. Her hands have never been soiled by labor. My circumstances in life are such that she is above the reach of necessity. She has but to speak, and her wishes are granted; but to wish, and the fulfillment is at hand," said Mr. Howland reddening at the fancied insinuation, and bowing stiffly at the close of his assertion.

"Come, Jane, let papa take you home," and he reached out his hand, as to a little, weak child.

Utter hopelessness hung like a dark cloud over Jennie's mind. She looked forward to her future through cold prison bars. She shivered as she rose, and sadly smiling a farewell, walked away beside her father.

Julia saw her pause as they entered the woods, and clasp her forehead tightly in her hands.

"And is this the promised reward, papa?" she said, and burst into tears.

"Yes, this is the last alternative; you would not bend, and—you had to break. Before to-morrow night, Jane, every family in the Glen and in Wendall will be sympathizing with you in your misfortune, and doubly sympathizing with me in my affliction," and he laughed aloud, like a demon over the fall of a poor inebriate!

"Oh, Father in heaven, save me, save me, from my fate! this wretched doom!" cried the frenzied girl, dropping upon her knees.

"It is too late now, Jane; the fiat has gone forth—the die is cast—and henceforth will maidens and young men shun you in fear; and little children will hide themselves from you; and matrons will pity and laugh softly to please and divert you. You would not stay within the bounds of that high position where my name and my means placed you securely; but, spurning your true companions, you sought the lowly born, the mean, the poor, the flippant courtesan, the ignorant and the illiterate. I besought you to spare my declining years the shame you were bringing upon me; I asked you to honor the name of my ancestors; I begged you to walk among your

equals; and I placed wealth and luxury at your command. But all were of no avail. 'Our set' will readily believe the rumor of your alienation of mind,—that is very near the truth at farthest,—and all others will soon learn to credit the assertion. I did not want to bring this upon you, Jane; but you *drove* me to it—you maddened me, and I saw no other alternative. Do not try to escape from your certain doom; it will do no good to deny the rumor, but will only fasten it more securely upon you. I will be the same to you as though every word of this were true—lenient and kind and forbearing with you. Remember, you have brought it upon yourself, and now seek to bear it as best you may."

She could not reply. Anger swelled her heart almost to bursting; and, bidding him a "good night" as they entered the house, she ran up stairs and cast herself tearless upon her bed.

CHAPTER XVI.

The features are all fair, sir, but so cold,
I could not love such beauty

A heart that, from its struggle with the world,
Comes nightly to the guarded cradle home,
And careless of the staining dust it brings,
Asks for its idol.

WILLIS.

"WHICH would you enjoy most, Mabel—the concert at the town hall, or a quiet evening with baby, down at Mary's?" said Charles Stanton, as he rose from the tea-table, and taking the latest papers from his pocket, sat down to read.

"Why the concert, surely, Charles," was Mabel's surprised rejoinder; "wouldn't you?"

"No, I prefer a romp with the baby far more than any of these soulless assemblages; for the music and singing of now-a-days don't suit me. It provokes me to hear those good old songs that my dear mother used to sing so sweetly, shrieked and howled and wailed out, with wide-open mouths and red tongues and frightful grimaces, by a pack of paid singers all standing in a row, like the old-fashioned spelling classes."

"Well, I promised Lillian I would go with her, and I guess I will have to."

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"I have been hard at work all day," said Charles, "but I consoled myself with thinking of the good time I'd have with baby to-night; and really, Mabel, I must call him by his new name, whatever it is to be; so before you go, tell me what you like best, and let's name him now."

"Oh, I don't care what he is named, though I believe I should prefer one name to be Hammond—Charles Hammond, if you like it."

"Well, that will please me, certainly; my father's name was Charles. But who is to escort you to the concert, Mabel?"

"Hughes is going with Lillian and me."

"Shall I tell Mary to bring baby up to-morrow?"

"Oh, no; 'I'll not trouble her to bring him up before Sunday, after service.'"

"Why, this is Tuesday! Can you wait that long to see the dear little fellow?"

"Yes, easily; I don't think about him very often. It is quite likely that Mary loves him better than I do—she is so fussy and foolish with him."

"I am afraid she does," thought he, as she retired to dress for the concert.

"Indeed, Charlie, I can hardly dress fit to go abroad any more," said Mabel, as she came sweeping down stairs in a rustling silk, a rich brocha-shawl thrown carelessly about her shoulders, and a bewitching little velvet bonnet, trimmed with sprays of starry red flowers.

"Oh, Mabel, yours is a face that needs no ornament—you would be beautiful if you were in rags," said Charles, in a glow of admiration.

"My purse will need replenishing when the spring goods and new fashions come on. You must remember, now."

"Well, Mabel, you must remember that I have a heavy payment to make on this property, and cannot possibly spare more than what you cannot do without. The style in which we try to live, and contingent expenses, draw very heavily upon my means. This all comes of occupying a respectable position in society; but I suppose one should be willing to pay for the honor and pleasure. Sometimes when I am so tired with the day's weight of labor, I think this all an empty, vain show, a delusion—and I envy the rough-clad mechanics, who go trooping home with their cheerful, bronzed faces, and their bright little tin pails, going to their humble homes, and their patient, loving wives, and happy, healthy children. Oh! they see real comfort—they get the very cream of life—while we, grasping, yearning, pompous, selfish aristocrats, live on the mere slop, deluding ourselves into the belief that we are their superiors."

"You are not appreciative of our great blessings, Charlie," said Mabel, coolly.

But Charles went on moodily as though the words flowed from him unconsciously:

"Every evening, as I come down Wood street, I see the newly lit candle in the neat shop of a shoemaker, who is busy at work, while his cheerful little wife sits near, laughing and talking with him, and sometimes playing to the sweet child, who is singing and cooing in the cradle at its mother's feet. He is king and she is queen, and baby is their sun and center. Just '*we three!*' Oh, Mabel, it seems so long to wait until our child can come home to us!—" but by this time Lillian

had come into the parlor, and Mabel and she were discussing the propriety of wearing hats or rigolettes.

Charles took up his hat and gloves, and went down street to the humble home of Mrs. Benton. As soon as he entered the door, all sober thoughts were scattered to the winds, and he sprang to his beautiful child, and kissed its plump cheeks and neck and bosom, as noisily and happily as any young mother would.

The little child reached up both fat hands, and felt of his face, and opened its mouth in its baby-joy, and laid its little white head on his bosom. It had learned to recognize him, and to love him. So strangely is it that a little child learns to love those who love it—learning this as if it were by instinct!

"Now, baby, I've come to visit you till you go to sleep and shut your blessed eyes away from papa," said he, as he patted its cheeks, and hid his face playfully in its sweet white bosom, and laughed to hear its low, gurgling, chuckling laughter. His cup of joy was full to the brim.

"I haven't seen Nora for two days, Mr. Stanton, and if you stay awhile I shall be so glad to run down and see my darling."

"Go, poor Mary. How could I be so happy and be the means of holding back from you the same joy? I would keep baby Charlie all the evening myself, even if he cried hard all the time, if it would purchase you as much pleasure as I have now."

"Thank you. Is his name to be Charles?" asked Mary, as she tied on her little black bonnet, with nervous, trembling hands. "Charles was the name of my only brother."

"Charles Hammond is the baby's name from this time

henceforth," said he, laughing to see it clutch at the diamond ring on his finger, and follow the sparkle of it wherever he moved his hand.

Mrs. Benton sat up in her chair by the table, and Charles was playing with the baby, when looking up, he asked how soon he could do without his nurse.

"When he is one year old, I think, if he continues healthy," she replied.

"Oh! mother, that is so long to wait. I thought Mabel said six or eight months. The little fellow is so dear to me, I long to have him near me, that when I come home tired at night, his little upreaching arms will be waiting to enclasp my neck, and his sweet face to nestle in my bosom. Oh! what a soothing influence goes with a dear, innocent baby. Truly, 'in a house they are a well-spring of pleasure.'

"Mabel is a good affectionate wife, but our tastes differ somewhat, not so much, however, as to cause unhappiness in the domestic relation. She is a noble woman, and she once offered her life a sacrifice for me; but God in mercy did not require it," said Charles, sadly. And then he related how Mabel left her home and friends, and came to minister to him and nurse him back to health.

"She loved like a true woman, or she could not have set aside all else as of little worth and clung to you then," said Mrs. Benton in reply. "And if your tastes differ, you must bend to meet hers, and she yours, until your natures will blend together in perfect harmony."

"Nora, darling," said Mary, as she took the lovely babe out of Mrs. Price's arms and held it in a long, loving clasp to her bosom. It was robed ready for its crib, and looked very sweet and cunning in its loose white gown.

Mrs. Price had grown to loving it quite as well as she had loved her own; and when Mary spoke of the time in which the babe would be restored to her again, Mrs. Price would shake her head pitifully, and turn the subject to something else.

Mary staid two hours or more, and Nora fell asleep in her arms, and was snugly nestling in bed when the poor mother kissed her a tender "good night," again and again, before leaving her. Mary had walked but a few steps from the house, when a manly voice said:

"Mary, I will walk home with you. It is in my way home—take my arm, please."

She hesitated a moment; but it was only Carl Winters, the young widower. She had known him when he was a boy; they had played together on the school house green, and rode on the same hand-sled, and angled in the same brook. So she took his arm with a low, "Thank you, Carl," saying, "I have been down to see Nora."

"You are a loving mother, Mary, and a good, kind girl. I have watched you long and admired your devotion to your feeble parent, and I have come to the conclusion that so good a daughter, mother and friend, will make a good wife; and to tell you this, I have been waiting more than an hour outside of the almshouse. I come to offer you my heart and hand, and to ask you to share with me the comforts and pleasures

of my little home. Oh! it is so dark and lonely now. As a light, will you not come to it?"

"Carl, would you call me your wife before the world, without blushing for the irrevocable past—without seeking to hide the truth?" asked Mary, as the tears fell very softly.

"I would be proud of you as my wife, and happy in trying to make you forget the past. I would love your mother and darling Nora as though they were mine, bound to me by nature's tenderest ties. Do you believe me Mary?"

"Carl, I do believe you."

Mr. Stanton had just laid his little Charlie on the bed, and was bidding "good night," as Mary and Carl entered the house. They stood by the bedside, and Mary laid his hand in her mother's, and Carl told her all. The sick woman burst into tears.

"It would be wrong to take me—I am such a burden, Carl. I am an invalid more than half the time; but oh! it will so soothe my last years to see my dear child beloved by a kind husband, and in a home where the necessities of life will be hers, without her toiling early and late. And dear little Nora—will you love her tenderly?"

"Very tenderly, mother. She shall be as a sister to my little Willie, and I will love both alike."

One week from that evening Charles went down to Mary's to spend the evening with his baby-boy, and was present at the marriage of the fair young nurse. He longed to give the bride a present of the purse in his pocket; but the haunting

thought of the heavy payment, the new spring goods, and the latest fashions, prevented him from exercising the desired liberality. He looked upon the honest, sunburnt cheek of Carl, and almost envied him the home that the meek, loving Mary could make even of a hovel.

CHAPTER XVII.

We who strive
To pluck the mote out of our brother's creed,
Till Charity's forgotten plant doth ask
The water-drop, and die.

MRS. SIGOURNEY.

What have you, any of you, to say to that,
Who are all happy, and sit safe and high?

MRS. BROWNING.

It was a special meeting of the members at the picturesque old church in Glen Green, on a sunny Saturday afternoon in May. Gray haired old men sat in the quaint oaken pews, leaning on their ivory-headed canes. It was one of those beautiful days in which the glory of spring falls upon one like a joy or an ecstasy too intensely pleasurable. The bees in yellow armor hung upon the trembling flowers, or plunged in among the tinted petals, until they were buried in sweets, and the birds sang among the pines that clustered about the gray walls of the old church, and fluttered in and out of the recesses formed by the clinging ivy of three decades' growth. The fragrance of the orchards and cherry and crab apple trees, lay upon the air, as soothing to the senses as

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is the sound of music, at the close of day, upon the silent bosom of a lake.

Under such influences, it would seem the minds of the little assembly would be peaceful and full of love to all God's creatures, and their thoughts elevated and drawn nearer to God. They sang a hymn, commencing:

How blest the man, whose cautious feet
Avoid the way that sinners go;

And Mr. Jones offered a feeling and unstudied prayer, followed by Mr. Lee, a great, portly, red-faced, good looking man.

Mrs. Lee sat up very prim and unwinking, looking out of the door as though she was thinking, let come what would, she would speak the truth. A heavy silk shawl lay in her lap, in the very same folds in which it was laid away two Sabbaths before. It was a shawl on which she prided herself, one her nephew or brother had brought home to her from California, and one she said that would be among the Lees for five hundred years to come, if it was as well kept as she would keep it while she lived.

We beg leave to digress a little. It is a fact worthy of note, that the first time she wore the beautiful shawl to church, was on a day of communion service; and to note the effect of it on her neighbors, she told her hired girl to sit near the door, so as to report how she appeared,* and how Mrs. Lisle and Mrs. Whitfield and that odious Mrs. Doctor Harper looked, when she came in. And she a communicant, who

* A fact.

partook of the sacred symbols of the broken body and the shed blood of the dear Jesus!

Biddy reported favorably on their way home from church, saying the embroidered flowers on it looked like stars of rale silver, and the fringe hung as pretty and shiny as the flossy silk of growing corn; and that Mrs. Lisle looked right away for spite, and Mrs. Whitfield looked as though she wanted her heel on Missus's beautiful neck, while Mrs. Harper's eyes fairly snapped fire.

Precious intelligence! Biddy got a present of a bran new linen handkerchief, neatly stitched, and "Bridget O'Flanagan" wrought in one corner with yellow silk thread, with a sprig of shamrock twining in and out of her poetical cognomen. Biddy chuckled, as she unrolled the gift that night, after she was undressed ready to go to bed, to take another look at it.

"Howly Saint Pathrick! but wasn't I born till good luck?" said the girl, as she spread it on the carpet, and got down on her knees to take a closer survey of the intertwined Irish name and Irish emblem. "Och, but it's purty! paid for, too, with a wee smather of good ould Irish blarney; for how cud I see the crathur come in, whin I's fast aslape with watchin'? Hon o' mon jowl! She tarried to home till the house was jammin' full, so they'd be the more to admire her—the vain paycock of a crathur! Irish wit afther all!" and the happy girl nodded her head and winked and laughed, showing tempting rows of great white teeth, as she carefully folded the treasure, and, rising from her knees, laid it away with the last letter that the kind old priest had transmitted to her from her parents in Ireland.

The minister rose, and stated that Miss Ethel Clarke had signified her intention of presenting herself as a candidate for membership, and that they had varied from their usual form a little for the reason that, as she was quite a stranger among them, if there were any objections, it would be well to bring them forward then, so that they might act free from embarrassment when she presented herself before them for admission.

Mr. Jones rose, and said he had no acquaintance with the woman, but had frequently seen her at service, and from her appearance and manner, he could say nothing against her being received, if she gave evidence of having become a partaker of the new life.

Old father Williams rose, and said about the same as Mr. Jones; the parson also, and added that, from a conversation he had held with her, he believed her heart changed, and that she loved her Master, and was anxious to do all she could in His service.

Mr. Lisle said he thought, from her demeanor, she was a child of God, and he could extend both hands in a hearty welcome.

Mr. Charles rose, and seemed to want to say something. He did not like to disagree with others of the brethren, but said he felt the honor of the church was at stake, and it behooved them to act cautiously, and not in too much haste. He said, "She is a stranger among us, and we should be wary; she might be a wolf in sheep's clothing, or she might be a-wishing to get into the church for the better furtherance of evil designs, and us Christians are as the light of the earth, a city set upon a hill. Christ has called us such, and it doubly behooves us, my brethering, to try and keep the church spot-

less and pure," and knocking a mote off his snow-white vest with a blow as though aimed at a pugilist, he stiffly took his seat.

"Have the sisters any remarks to make?" said father Williams.

Mrs. Lee rose to her feet, with her silken shawl hanging on one arm, and a nicely folded handkerchief lying across the other: "Brethern and sistern, I feel myself very unworthy, but I thank the Lord for lifting me out of the bonds of iniquity and the mire of sin, and setting my feet on dry ground. I feel that God is very near to me, and constantly watching over and protecting me, and keeping me from sin and wickedness. I love the church very much, and my daily prayers are for its welfare, and that it may be kept pure and clean and holy unto the day in which the Lord will come to claim his bride, the Lamb's wife. Brethern and sistern, I want all done that is for the good of the church. I think it would not be right to take into the church, as a sister, the woman who comes to us when we don't know what kind of character she has, or if she has any at all, to bring into the church. For my my part, I feel as if I couldn't fellowship her, very well, and couldn't commune with her at the Lord's table. I would not feel it to be right," and she sat down, caressing the silk shawl, as though she was trying to mesmerize it.

Mrs. Charles rose, and sanctioned all that Mrs. Lee had said, adding that for her part she thought they had better wait a year or two, until the character of the woman was established, so they would be sure of bringing no disgrace into the church. She said it was a matter of great moment, and they should act very cautiously and calmly.

Mrs. Carter rose next and said mildly, "I think Ethel Clark is a child of God—you who are unacquainted with her would be easily convinced of her love to God, if you would be conciliating and permit her acquaintance. I think she would be an honor to any church. God is blessing her abundantly, and while we are spiritually starving, and far from our Father, she lives near to Him, and is drawing largely from His bounteous love. For my part, I believe if she comes into the church of Glen Green, she will bring a blessing with her, and we would all rejoice in the day she came to share with us a Saviour's love.

Cicely Lisle was asked for her opinion. She rose modestly, and in a low sweet voice, as clear and distinct as a bell, she said, "If the church thought it best to receive her, and all the members united in welcoming her, she would be pleased; but Ethel would not come in unless by the unanimous voice of the members." She testified to the goodness and beauty of character that she bore in her estimation.

Mrs. Lee rose again, and thought it would be best to write to the former place of Ethel's residence, and inquire what her character was.

Mrs. Phillips rose with flashing eyes, and said that "written testimonials were worthless, compared with the honest, open, frank expression of countenance, and the sweet, trusting, loving flow of words that bubbled up from a heart filled with love to God and all humanity; a heart soured by no evil passions, embittered by no distrust, and hardened by no crime. No really honest, upright man or woman will accept of a written recommendation; it is a slur on the nobility of nature, who hath ever written testimonials on the brow and lip, and

in the eyes and mien and voice; and too often does the one written by God, belie the falsely penned one of crafty man."

The pastor looked down while his noble wife was talking. He trembled lest in her incautious, impulsive manner of speaking, she should incur the displeasure of some of the members—the wealthiest and most aristocratic ones, who were his strong friends, and paid him a handsome salary. He determined to say no more, so they should think he disapproved of her sentiments.

After all the members had an expression a vote was taken. All the male members were in favor of her coming into the church, except Mr. Charles; all the female members were opposed to her, except Mrs. Phillips, Mrs. Lisle, Mrs. Carter and Mrs. Loring.

How strangely uncharitable women are, especially if against one of their own sex! An anomaly in nature! Woman, with her armor of love and gentleness, her tears and smiles, her soft sweet voice; woman, as a loving mother, a fond wife, her life all bound up in her affections; last at the cross and earliest at the grave; a ministering angel in sickness; woman, sanctified through deep sorrow, walking weakly beside strong man, as a light, a guide—ofttimes a saviour; woman, fervent in prayer, closest to her God; thrice brighter her crown than man's! Such is woman! And yet she will spurn her weak sister from her side, banish her from her presence, hate her—because she falls through temptation herself hath never known or felt or dreamed of; spurn her, because it hath pleased God to afflict a great heart with a greater sorrow, in preparation for the work she has to do on earth, before she can sit angel-

crowned under the palms of heaven, where we shall "know each other even as we are known!"

"I am sorry," said the pastor, "that the members could not all be agreed, one way or the other; but I hope, dear brothers and sisters, that this slight difference of opinion will be forgotten, and that all will work together for the glory of God. Let us love one another; let us imitate that Great Teacher who has given us such priceless lessons of love, faith and charity, and looking up to Him, let us profit by His example! We will join together in singing a hymn to His praise, commencing with:

"Blest is the man whose softening heart,
Feels all another's pain,
To whom the supplicating eye
Is never raised in vain."

Mr. Lee rose, and said the brethren had thought some of having the old church repaired, new-roofed, etc., and now they could speak their minds about it.

Like a grain of bursting pop-corn, up jumped Mr. Charles, and slipping back his coat cuffs, (some how all his motions seemed to show a spirit of fighting,) began jerking out the sentences vehemently.

"Brethering and sistering, I am offen grieved when I pass this house, to see its 'lapdated condition. The moss grows in tuffs all over this ruff, and about the eaves, and the wild ivery climbs over it the same as if it was a ruinous ole mill or distillery. In times of a storm, I have seen these trees lap together over the ruff! Brethering, it don't look right to use a house o'the Lord after this fashion—it ort to stan' out in the

sunshine, and wear a holy look, as though it was desecrated to the Lord instead of being a hiding place for moles and bats and hatching birds, and such like varmin. It looks as though we didn't reference our place o'worship; it's too much like holding meetin' out in the woods;" and panting from exhaustion, he took his seat and wiped his face vigorously, on a handkerchief so red that it looked scalding hot.

"The groves were God's first temples, brother Charles," said the pastor, rising, "and if it could be so, it would always be a proper place to hold divine worship. For my part, I look upon this old mossy edifice—draped in vines and embosomed in trees and shrubbery—as the most beautiful and fitting place we could find, in which to worship God. It is poetical, and the poetical is akin to the spiritual—they are inseparable. I should protest against seeing these walls stripped of their wondrously beautiful garb, or that the ax be laid at the root of one of these familiar trees, or that the destructive blast should rive one of these old rocks. I love them all, and I hope my last sermon may be in this same haunt of the lovely, and natural, and romantic. I presume we will have to put on a new roof, as this one begins to leak a little; but let us lovingly spare every waving branch of pine that reaches out over the house, like a kind hand in benediction and blessing."

All the men expressed their views, and agreed with the pastor, except Mr. Charles.

Mr. Lee, too, did beg the privilege of asking, if clinging vines and trailing and drooping branches did not rot the weather-boarding and roof, and suggested that it would be more saving and protective if the house stood free from all

such useless incumbrances, out in the warm, dry, glaring sunshine.

"Dear brother," said the pastor, "I would as willingly hear you call your wife and darling children encumbrances, as these summer-loving and breeze-wooling old pines and ivies;" and he laughed cheerily, and looked over towards Mrs. Lee, but her face wore a hard, gray, stony expression, like a rock.

The meeting was about ready to be dismissed; so Mr. Charles was called upon to make the closing prayer. His words were warm and vehement, as though his soul were on fire, burning with love to all, and zeal in the good work of the Christian.

Then they sang that sweet hymn, "Lord, dismiss us with thy blessing," the pastor pronounced a loving benediction, and the meeting closed.

Mrs. Carter and Cicely Lisle walked home together.

"Oh," said Cicely, "what will poor Ethel say! I am so sorry for her!"

"I believe she is a true Christian," said Mrs. Carter, "and she will meekly and kindly receive the tidings. Had you observed, Cicely, how much worse her cough is, and how brightly the hectic spot glows on either cheek? She thinks she will not stay another winter in the flesh. Her father's family inherited consumption, and I have no doubt she has it. I hope she may hear of the decision of the church from a friend first, that it may be broken to her kindly.

"When they reached Mr. Lisle's, Alice and Ella Carter and Mattie Loring were all there together, and Alice had supper waiting. The three girls were inseparable companions,

about one age—fourteen years—half a woman, half a child, or on the threshold “where the woman and the child meet.”

When Mrs. Lee got home, she rated poor Bridget soundly for not having supper ready, and scolded Grace for asking to go to the singing school at the Glen schoolhouse, and slapped Flora for showing her little brother the corner flower on mother’s pretty shawl.

“Really, after all the parson said about your children being incumbrances, Lee, he wasn’t much out of the way, if this is how they act,” she said, when they had sat down to the supper table, and Flora had spilled her tea.

“Oh, wife! don’t talk so. If it was to please the good Lord to take one of them home, you might think of this with remorse,” said Mr. Lee; and he thought about her saying at church that she lived so near to the Lord, and that she was kept from all sin. And the poor man cannot be blamed, if in his own mind he contrasted her daily walk and conversation with what she had professed at church.

Ah! the daily walk and conversation it is that proves a Christian. It will speak louder than any protestation that can be made in language.

CHAPTER XVIII

Oh, she was changed,
As by the sickness of the soul.
Upon her face there was the tint of grief,
The settled shadow of an inward strife,
And an unquiet drooping of the eye,
As if its lid was charged with unshed tears.

BYRON.

The reed in storms may bow and quiver,
Then rise again.

BYRON.

TWO RUMORS were flying from lip to lip in Glen Green and Wendall. Old ladies were tying on their black bombazine aprons, and arranging the frills that shaded their brown foreheads, and pinning their kerchiefs down precisely between their shoulders, and gadding off among their neighbors to tell the news, and glean additional particulars.

“Poor Jane Howland’s gone clean crazy—dunno any mor’n a broomstick,” said old Mrs. Watkins to Mrs. Armstrong, the poor woman at whose door Jennie had left the parcel in the night.

“Well, the world is so much the worse off,” was the reply, “for if there is a good, kind, pious girl in the world, one who

lives religion every day, it is Jennie Howland. Her father sold my man a lame horse, and when he found he was lame, the old rascal refused to take him back; and when my man left the house, feeling real bad, that good girl slipped out slyly and followed him; and he said she stood by him, with her little, pale hand holding his'n, and did talk to him like an angel.

"He said he busted right out a-crying, when she told him he must forgive her father, and pray for him as though he was praying for a good friend, and she thought the Lord would hear his prayers and answer 'em. She told him he should not be the loser in the end; and when he started home, she gave him a puss to give to me and the children, and it had over fourteen dollars in it. And ever since then we have had gifts slipped to us so slyly that we never knew how we got 'em; but we could easy guess where they came from."

"Dew tell!" said Mrs. Watkins, "if that don't beat all natur—that's livin' out the religion the Bible teaches. Her loss will be univarsally regretted, if she never gets well agin, while on the other hand, no one will be sorry to lose Laura Whitfield."

"What of her?" said Mrs. Armstrong, "is she dead or crazy?"

"Hadjn't you hearn tell of her running off with that for-rainer, a Count or Prince or Counters, or whatever he is?" said the old woman.

"No, indeed!" said Mrs. Armstrong in surprise.

"Well, I'll just tell ye the long an' short of it then—all I know about it. You see we were out o' tea, and Shubal he hadn't time to go to the store last night, and so I got 'im off

bright and airly this mornin', while the butter was cool and solid; and he was in the store and Mr. Whitfield was weighin' out the tea, when old Miss Whitfield come in cryin' with a letter in her hand that had been found in Laura's room, a sort of farewell letter that she had wrote in the night before she 'loped. There was something in it 'bout bein' forgiven and all that. Shubal he didn't hear all about it, only that Mr. Whitfield blamed old Miss Whitfield a good deal, and said right out afore my man, it all come o' her bringin' up her gals so foolishly and idly, and 'couragin' them in readin' novels, and such like, and I b'leve too, it has been the ruin o' many a fine gal, tryin' to be like the fine, fal-de-ral ladies they read about. Shubal said she did carry on 'mazingly about it, and was afraid people would look on it as disgraceful to them, havin' a gal run off, instead o' being married off 'spectably at home by a parson. It'll be apt to bring old Miss Whitfield down a little I think," and here the old lady paused and took a pinch of snuff.

"Jane, Jane!" said Mr. Howland, as he rapped at the door of Jennie's room, one afternoon after she had declined eating breakfast and dinner. There was no response, and he raised the latch and went in. She was sleeping sweetly and soundly. The Bible lay on the pillow beside her, and some of the late papers were on the stand by the bedside.

Something closely wrapped in a bit of coarse brown paper, lay between the leaves of the Bible. He opened it, and found it to be opium.

A suspicion crossed his mind that she may have taken too much; and when he found she would not awake, he hurried down stairs, and told Mina to make a cup of very strong coffee, that Jane desired it. He carried it up stairs, and, closing the door, spoke close down beside her face, and tried to waken her; but the heavy breathings were continued.

"Get up, I say, and drink this," and he pulled her hand. The lips parted as though she essayed to speak, but she slept on. "Jane, Jane!" and he drew her up angrily; but her head fell to one side, listlessly. "Jane!" and he struck her smartly on the cheek, and again on the temple. "Come, enough of this!" and he slapped her until the red marks of his fingers showed plainly on the pale sad face.

Her eyes opened wide, and glared strangely about her; but as he turned half away to reach for the saucer, the gaze grew leaden, and the silken lashes almost swept her cheek; but the stinging slap revived her, and frightened, she cowered down, and the muscles about her mouth and eyes twitched as indicative of spasms. He spoke roughly to her, and she drank off the bitter draught in fear, without knowing what it was. He sat down by her bedside, never taking his keen eyes off her face, expecting the draught to act as an emetic. He feared he had tempted her mild, yet strangely resolute mind too far, and that she had taken opium to rid herself of an existence that was now as night compared to the glorious light of day. In a few minutes the coffee had completely shook off the effect of the opiate, and she was nervous and excitable.

"What did you come here for, father?" she asked, looking sharply into his face with her large, luminous eyes.

"I wanted you to eat something, and came up to ask you, when I found you in such a strange, deep sleep. I was alarmed, too, when I found this," and his eyes shone snakily as he held up the paper of opium.

She reached out her hand for it, but he shook his head, asking, "What would you do with it?"

"Take a little every night. I can't sleep since—since—father it comforts me physically, as this does spiritually," and she laid her hand on her Bible, "and I cannot give it up," she said earnestly.

"Well, you can't have it. It will ruin your mind and prostrate your bodily powers, and make you as loathsome as the inebriate," said he, in a tone that showed gratification in triumphing over his poor child.

"Father," and she laid her hand out towards him, "it must be a pleasure to you to torture me. You have kept me dying by inches, ever since I can remember, for no reason, unless it be that I was not born a son, to bear your name, and to be proud and cold and heartless like yourself. Because I took the example of the Saviour for mine, and loved the true and honest and poor and lowly-born, and sympathized with the unfortunate—because of this you hate me, and it gluts your soul with pleasure to wrong and torture me. I know I am full of faults; but I have had no mother to teach me, to take me by the hand and lead me in pleasant places, and seek to make me a good and noble woman.

"You commend yourself highly for giving me a luxurious home and ease and plenty. I had rather toil for my support by far: I had been happier in doing it. God never meant any of his creatures should live in idleness, and be pampered

while others should suffer the sore pinchings of poverty and want. And because I could not sanction your sentiments, and live them out, and make my whole life a living lie, you wreak your vengeance on me, as you would on a dog that had slain and devoured the choicest lambs of the flock.

"Father, you are unjust in the sight of God and man. I would not wrong or expose you if I could. Let it rest between yourself and your Maker. You are your worst enemy. If you say so, I will become a nun in a cloistered convent, dead to you, and to all the world; and it would be removing one great cause of trouble out of your way. I have nothing to live for; there are none to love me, none to comfort me. Even sleep, which was once like a white-winged angel, laden with blessings, comes not near me now, but stands off, like a gaunt demon, with taunting laughter and gibes and grimaces."

"Is that all you have to say, most dutiful?" said he, sneeringly, as he rose to leave. "It is painful to listen to insane gibberish."

"Father, don't take that bit of opium. It is all I have got, and there is no rest, no forgetfulness, or escape for me, unless I take a little at night," said Jennie, pleadingly, as she sat up in bed.

"It will destroy your health, Jane."

"Health! I have not sufficient now for a puny babe! Don't take it! It is like taking away the staff from a feeble old man," and she reached out her hand, piteously crying out, but the tall, erect form moved away as stately as though his tread was in the halls of Congress, and admiring eyes resting enviously upon him.

His horse was brought out at his command, and he rode to

Wendall, where he called on every druggist, and cautioned them against selling opium or laudanum to his unfortunate child, whom he averred was insane, and might destroy herself if she had the means in her power.

After Mr. Howland had left the house, Mina stole up stairs, and asked Jennie if she might come in.

"Oh, you are welcome, most welcome, Mina," said Jennie, as she crept close up to her bosom, and cried bitterly.

"I am so sorry for you, Miss Jennie," said Mina.

"Sorry for what, girl?" she asked.

"Oh, that you're—you're—crazy—poor thing!" she said, beginning to cry herself as she caressed Jennie's hair.

"Are you afraid of me, Mina?"

"No, I'm not afraid of you, like other folks are. I guess you are troubled and grieved and sick, but will soon be well again," said the girl soothingly.

"Yes, I think so; I feel like I always did, only my heart is most broke with trouble," was the reply, for Jennie well knew it was of no avail to deny the false accusation; it would only make the matter worse, and show to the world that a spirit of unkindness dwelt between the father and child.

"Let me comb and brush and curl your hair, Jennie," said the girl, in a conciliating tone, just as we speak to one with a bruised heart—tenderly as we touch a harp whose strings are broken.

"I couldn't eat any dinner to-day, I felt so lonesome and bad," said Mina, "but I have made some nice biscuit for you, and the kind of cake you like best, and roasted a piece of a plump partridge that Mrs. Armstrong sent over just for you, and I came up to tell you that you must eat a little, and feel

stronger, and be able to walk out and enjoy this pleasant evening."

The thought of recovery was an unpleasant one to Jennie; there were no delicious dreams in the future, such as woo back to life the youthful invalid; no gentle hand to part away the curtains of the time "to come," and let in floods of rosy and golden light upon her beautiful but darkened life; none of this!

"Has there been any body here to see me, or inquire after my health, Mina?" said Jennie, while the good girl was arranging the tea on the stand, and shaking up the cushions on the big chair.

"Oh, yes, child; Julia Clarke was over here to inquire about you, and she brought you a lovely bouquet of flowers—so sweetly arranged, too—and I was just putting them in a vase with water, to bring up and put on your stand, when your father asked who it was that had so neatly fixed those flowers? and when I told him Julia Clarke, he tore them all into atoms, and scolded me for taking them from her. I guess he don't like Julia very well," said Mina.

Jennie hid her dissatisfaction by saying the flowers would surely have pleased her, and then asked if Mrs. Armstrong had been over too.

"Oh, yes; two or three times. And Mrs. Lane, and Mrs. Loring, and Mrs. Lisle, and Mrs. Carter, and Myra Willis, and dear little Alice Lisle,—they have all been here to inquire how you were getting. Your father said it would be best for you not to see any company, that you would be more composed if no one intruded upon you, else they would all have come up stairs."

"I presume it was best," was the reply, as Jennie sat down beside the faithful girl, and partook of the repast prepared by those kind hands.

"How nicely you did cook the partridge, and how very kind it was of dear Mrs. Armstrong to send it."

"Oh! God is very good to give me such considerate friends. I have felt for a week or two as if I had none to love me, and thought death would be so welcome, but it is very wrong to murmur at what is best," and she absolutely smiled in the twilight quiet that was stealing over her mind.

Dear Jennie! she was learning the most precious lesson that our lives can learn—the *quiet of the heart*! Learning to conquer the evil passions, to hush the wail, and the sigh, and smother the burst of grief, and the gush of unrestrained emotion; learning to smile while the heart was breaking—to look up to God in all the strength of a whole and perfect faith, to trust in the Father even as a little child trusts in the guiding hand which leads it—learning to walk patiently and hopefully onward; to lift herself by prayer above the vicissitudes of a life of trial and probation, into a purer atmosphere, one in which all ills and vexations would glance off, leaving her unharmed and unscathed. Learning to look upward—one in the graduating class preparing for Heaven. Oh! it is well with those travel-stained and foot-sore and weary ones, when they have attained to a membership in that class!

There was not one of all Jennie's acquaintance who did not credit the report of her being insane. They all knew her to be susceptible in the highest degree, enthusiastic, warm-hearted and devoted to every high and noble principle. She was very studious, and of a delicate organization, not capable of any

severe exertion either of mind or body. Knowing all this, it was easy to believe her mind impaired.

As soon as Mr. Howland returned, Mina hurried down stairs, and Jennie was left alone. She raised her window and sat by it reading, when a troop of school children passed, and seeing her looking out, some of them started and ran, pulling their little brothers and sisters after them, saying in a low tone, "Run, run, there's that crazy girl!"

"You, Davy, run! massy! she'll git out and kill us, I bet," said a lank, yellow looking girl of perhaps a dozen summers, as she seized a tardy little boy by the collar of his jacket, and dragged him, knocking against her bare heels, away from the garden gate, through which he was peeping.

"Oh! I'll go across the fields the next time!" said a pale little girl, as she flung herself panting upon the grass at the roadside.

"I am so afraid of crazy people; one time a crazy woman tried to kill my ma with a knife, and she is just as 'fraid that Jennie Howland will come up to our house some time, and kill her or the baby, while pa is at town and me at school, that she stays up stairs some days, with all the lower doors locked and bolted."

"If I ever meet her," said the lank girl, "and she takes after me, I'll run right towards her, and catch both her hands, and hold 'em tight, and holler murder just as loud as I can scream!"

"Well," said Ora Dewitt, a little, mild, sunshiny-souled child, who had rather play in the meadows, and look at the blue sky, and watch the golden-edged and fleecy clouds, than go to school, "I'll tell aunt Abbie that it'll make me crazy too,

sending me to school every day, and making me learn all the definitions and comas and geography, and stuffing me so full learning that I'll be like Jennie Howland, and I guess she'll be to blame;" and the little creature nodded her head, gesticulating, and seemingly well pleased with the new idea, and the good excuse she had found.

Jennie saw and heard part of this—enough to make the swelling sobs rise; but she choked them back, as she looked up, saying prayerfully, "No more pain, no more sickness, and no more sorrow! Bless God that life is but a span long, and then cometh the glorious dawn, and the rest that is not broken, but endureth forever!"

CHAPTER XIX.

But when I asked for thee, they took me where
A hallowed mountain wrapped its verdant head
In changeful drapery of woods and flowers
And silvery streams, and where thou erst did love
Musing to walk, and lend a serious ear
To the wild melody of birds that hung
Their unharmed dwellings 'mid its woven bowers.

MRS. SIGOURNEY.

He was a being e'en more glorious still;
The seal of genius on his brow was seen—
His was a voice rich as the harp's deep thrill,
A large dark eagle eye and noble mien.

MRS. WELBY.

"MOTHER," said Alice Lisle, "Mattie and Ella and me promised to meet this afternoon at the poor lonely grave on the hill above the fountain, and fix it up and plant a willow and a multiflora on it, and have it all a-bloom by the time we are ready to buy the tomb-stones and——Mother, are you sick?" said the girl, stopping short and going towards her, as Cicely sunk in a chair. She shook her head and essayed to speak, while Alice hurried and brought her a glass of water.

"Is it palpitation of the heart again, mother?"

"Yes, Alice, I came very near fainting, but I feel better

now. It came over me so suddenly. But what were you talking about? I forget."

"About we three girls going to the fountain."

"Oh, yes, I remember. Well, you shall go. I had rather see you notice such a lonely, nameless grave as that is, than to stand in admiration before the monument of Italian marble that was wrought by the hands of artists in far away Italy, and brought here at an expense that would have purchased homes for all the poor widows in this country."

"Did you ever see the schoolmaster who is buried there, mother?" asked Alice.

"Oh, yes; I went to school one winter to him."

"Was he a good, kind man?"

"He was a very good man. I remember once it snowed all day, and at night it was very difficult for those to get home whose parents did not come after them. I had got about half way home when the drifts made the way almost impassable, and I was sitting resting when the teacher came after me, saying he knew the Glen would be drifted deeper than any of the rest of the road, and he had hurried to assist me home.

"He took my hand and helped me along, and I have often thought I never could have toiled alone through those piled-up drifts, for I was so exhausted, and my breath was almost gone. The Christmas evening after that, he took me in a sleigh to a lecture over to Irving village.

"I was a bashful girl then, not older than you are now, and he was so genteel and accomplished, and so entertaining in conversation that it was very strange he should prefer my society to that of any of the other girls. He was reading

law the summer he died," and Cicely paused as though the subject was very painful.

"Tell me all about him, mother, the poor stranger. I wish I'd been as old as I am now, so I could have taken care of him. Mattie said he died a pauper. Did he?"

Cicely burst into tears, and leaned her head down on the stand and wept aloud. As quick as thought the remembrance came to Alice's mind of a woman visiting the lonely grave at night, and weeping over it. Could it be Cicely? That flood of tears revealed the truth. Alice kept her suspicions all her life locked in her own heart. She only loved and pitied and venerated her the more deeply.

"Don't cry, mother. I know you loved him just as I loved poor Miss Claypoole, who died down at uncle's. Everybody loves their teachers, if they are kind and good. Don't tell me about him, if you feel bad."

"Yes, he died a pauper," resumed Cicely. "He took sick at the widow Warren's, and had not the means to pay for such attentive care as he needed, and the town did it. People said the widow was a hard nurse, making him wait always until she had waited upon her children in the mornings, and forcing him to take nauseous medicine when he was so very sick, and refusing him water, when he pleaded distractedly for only a half a glass full.

"I went in to see him one time, while he was raving and calling piteously for water. He would say:

"Oh, mother! I have come home to get a drink of the good water from the fountain. How delicious it does look, pouring down in such a sparkling, crystal stream, and running over the mossy brim of the rocky basin, and gurgling along

down the hills in such a pretty rill. Mother, give me a brimming glass of it, and then let me lay my poor head on your bosom, and rest like I did when I was your darling little boy. Oh, mother! it has been a weary, weary way I've wandered, since that morning I bade you farewell. But now I've come home to drink of the fountain at the door, and drink anew from the unfailing fountain of your love. Mother, lay your hand on my poor forehead, and he lay quietly as though that mother in silence was blessing her dear boy.

"Then starting up suddenly, he saw me, and begged that I would give him a drink. Oh! it was so hard to refuse, and I could not look upon that pleading face and out-reached hand without tears, as I told him the doctor had strictly forbidden it, and the nurse was even yet more resolute.

"Never mind them, Cicely," he said. "It is the last favor I shall ever ask of you. I shall die anyhow; and must I die madly craving that which God gives us so freely?" and his lips were dry and parched from intense thirst, and there was a fire in his eyes, which made them gleam fiercely, as though his whole being was in extreme torture.

"I was a girl then, timid and impressible. Had I been a woman, as I am now, I would have given him a drink, had the old virago taken my life for it. I could not stand the pleading, and I went home, weeping, with those piteous cries for water, water, ringing in my ears."

"His torture grew insupportable, and he raved and gnashed his teeth like a maniac, until within a few moments before he died, he grew quiet, and seemed to slumber. Then he woke, smiling, and said:

"Who gave me water to drink? Oh! she was so lovely;

and her robes were white and flowing; and her face was gloriously beautiful; and the cup was of gold, filled at the fountain that never fails. How cooling and delicious was the draught, and what a wondrous depth of love was hers, to tempt her to come to me, bearing such a blessing! And now let me sleep and rest—I am so weary, so weary. But the good angel left him not until he had entered that rest which remaineth for the children of God. Poor sufferer! I cannot shake off that remorseful thought, connected with the last time I ever saw him.”

“Oh, mother! what a sad fate his was!” said Alice. “Did he talk much about his mother and home?”

“When he was delirious, he imagined himself at home all the time; and when he had his senses, he was wishing to see his mother, and saying as soon as he could ride, he would go right to her. All his clothes and books were sold to help pay for his boarding and nursing.”

In the afternoon the three girls were to meet at the grave. It was a kind of trysting place for them, because it was about an equal distance from all their homes.

Alice arrived there first, and was sitting thinking of all her mother had been telling her, and of the lonely hearts away in that darkened home, where they mourned the fate of the dear son and brother. The multiflora lay beside her, with a little basket of choice flowers and roots, and a book she had brought to lend Ella Carter, that Jennie Howland had given her, Moore’s “Loves of the Angels.” She sat with her head leaning down on her hands, her bonnet lying beside her, and her curls, free from band or ribbon, were hanging about her shoulders. The sound of footsteps fell upon her ear.

They came nearer and paused. She looked up, and a stranger stood by the grave. He touched his hat politely, and she sprang to her feet in embarrassment.

“Pray be seated, Miss,” said he. “I am sorry to surprise you in your meditations; but I was not aware of there being any one in this lonely place, until I came near you. I beg your pardon for disturbing you, and ask your permission to be seated a few moments until I rest myself from climbing these wild steeps.”

Alice bowed, and the stranger sat down on the grass at the other side of the grave. His manner of speaking reassured her, and, forgetting her embarrassment, she sat down again. He was a young man of perhaps twenty-eight years, with large, dark, hazel eyes and brown hair, tall and straight, with a voice of singular sweetness and softness.

“I came up from Wendall depot on foot, and am trying to find my way to Mr. Lee’s. My native home is in the south, and for the sake of a change of climate and my health, I have come north to stay awhile among the old ocean airs, and the wild healthful hills of Massachusetts. I am a teacher by profession, and shall consider myself very fortunate if I can secure a school for a few months, here in wild, delightful Glen Green,” said he, in that frank manner which all true, warm-hearted southerners have.

“Do you live in the Glen, Miss?”

“Yes, in the very heart of it, among its rocks, and sombre shades, and waterfalls and dashing brooks,” said Alice, her eyes sparkling with the gush of poesy that was filling her heart, “and I thank you, sir, for loving and appreciating the

place of my nativity. It makes me vindictive to hear anyone speak lightly of Glen Green."

"I love with enthusiasm the beautiful and sublime in nature. They so unconsciously lead one's thoughts up to God and heaven, and purify the soul by its communion with His wonderful works," and the young man's face seemed to grow seraphic, as he dwelt with rapture on this exalting theme.

"This is a sweet place to sleep, after life's fitful fever is past," said he, as he looked up at the magnificent pines that reared high their heads above the sequestered spot, and flung out their waving branches like protective arms over the sanctity of the place. "Is this the grave of a relative or friend?" he asked.

Then Alice, in her simple, child-way, told him all she knew about the sleeper beneath the flower-gemmed sod. He sat and listened, admiring her simplicity and touching style of eloquence, and the tender depth of feeling she betrayed. He, the educated man of the world, who had bowed at the peerless shrine of beauty, in gorgeous city parlors, and feasted his eyes on fair faces in the halls of wealth and fashion, he could have bent in admiration to that free child of nature, who was unstudied in all the arts and wiles of the world about her. He saw, even in those few minutes, more of the wondrous womanly beauty he had read of, and dreamed about, as he pored over quaint old tales of chivalrous times and the rare gems of poetry, than his surfeited soul had ever hoped to see and realize.

"My school-mates, Mattie and Ella, are to meet me here this afternoon, and we are going to plant a willow and this

multiflora, and some posies. Poor man! he has none else to make beautiful his last resting place," said Alice.

"Why was he buried here?" asked the stranger.

"Oh! he loved this old place for its wildness and quietude and solemn beauty, and they buried him here because of that; and then they expected his friends would come and take his body to their own family cemetery; but they never came, or even answered the letters that were sent them."

"How far is it from here to Mr. Lee's?" he asked, after a pause, as he rose to his feet.

"It is quite in sight, and as the girls have not come yet, I will walk down with you as far as to Mr. Lee's orchard, and show you the house," and Alice tied on her hat and walked by his side.

"Have you ever had a select school in the Glen?" he inquired.

"Nearly every summer since I can remember, sir."

"I hope I shall succeed in getting one; and if I do, we bid fair to become friends," said he, with a witching smile. "You will be one of my pupils, I presume. If you are, what name shall I call you?"

"Alice—Alice Lisle."

"Alice Lisle!" said he, dreamily; "the name is a sweet one, and falls on my ear like a sound I have heard in my dreams. It comes to me like the songs my mother sang to me when I was almost a babe, as though it was bringing to memory something I had forgotten! My name is Ernest Carrol, Miss Lisle; and now I do defy any model book of etiquette to get up a better form of introduction than this

of ours," and he laughed merrily, and Alice could not help but join with him.

"There is Mr. Lee's residence, Mr. Carrol—that large white cottage among the Lombardy poplars," and she pointed down through the vistas of apple, peach and cherry trees, that were covered with puffs of bloom, pink and white and rose-red, loading the air with a delicious perfume, while, above the other masses of bloomy verdure, the pear-trees rose, crowned with snowy blossoms, until they looked like swells of surf.

Beautiful! beautiful! How strange that every person is not a poet! Strange that sweet songs do not well up from hearts touched and softened and spiritualized by the wondrous beauty of this earth-loveliness! Strange that all are not Christians! that there is one here and one there who never bend the knee, or upraise the pleading, grateful hands, or pour out from a soul deep-burdened with a sense of gratitude, burning tears and broken words! Strange that fair-browed maidens can twine wreaths of snow-white roses upon their foreheads, and heap their hands full of pure white lilies, and tread their careless feet on beds of cream-white violets—and their lips and hearts be mute and cold, and no "Te Deum" rise up and fill the silent meadows and the green woods with the gush of glad song that should be warming their souls!

Alice turned and went back to the grave, and reached it just as Mattie and Ella did.

"Have you been here long, Alice?" asked Mattie.

"An hour, perhaps, but I was not lonesome," and then she told the girls about the stranger and all that had passed between them.

"I know he will get the school," said Mattie, "for last night

I heard uncle and Mr. Phillips talking; and they said we'd ought to have a select school—that there were plenty of scholars to make up two schools, and Mr. Phillips said it might be held in the old church after they got the new roof on it, for it is so much nearer the centre of the Glen than any other building."

"Oh, wouldn't I like to go to school in the dear old church, all hid away like a darling old bird's nest as it is!" said Alice, clapping her hands in glee, and shaking her wealth of curls.

"But oh, girls, it hardly seems right to be so happy here, by this poor man's grave. Oh, I'll tell you what mother told me about him. It makes my heart ache every time I think about it," and she went on telling all that her mother had told her, of his last moments, and of dying in a sweet kind of soothing dream, and how the hard old nurse had made him suffer for water, and would give her noisy babies drink right before him, in a cool glass, with the sweaty drops trickling down the outside, and looking temptingly delicious.

Both girls wept freely during the recital, for Alice was imaginative, and in some degree eloquent, and could command good and proper language, and she could tell a story in words so appropriate, that the dullest incident would look interesting after she had told it in her earnest, glowing way, and you had watched the play of her features.

"And now let us go to work," she said, after a moment's silence; and she took the mattock in her little hands, and, carefully removing the sod, she planted the multiflora while little Mattie set out the weeping willow. It had been pruned, cut off in the fall, and she had put it in the ground, and it had taken root, and was now a growing little shrub that bade fair

to make a beautiful tree. Ella set out the flower-roots, watered them, and assisted to replace the broken sod.

They had just got the work done when Grace Lee came running toward them, with her sun-bonnet pinned closely about her face, to keep the May winds off.

"What are you doing, girls?" she called out.

"We have been planting some flowers and shrubs on this grave," said Ella.

"Oh, you are a set of sleepy nuns, poking around at such useless work. Likely as not, father's dapple gray will take your posies for a desert after his supper of oats. Girls, did you know about that other grave?" and she nodded her head in the direction of the orchard.

"I didn't know of any other," said Alice, with surprise depicted in her countenance, as she hurriedly rose to her feet.

"We had an old horse by the name of Jolly die, because he couldn't breathe any more, and they buried him there, ha! ha! ha!" and the pretty, plump, but vulgar girl laughed until she had to sit down in very weariness.

"Your originality dates back to some of your old almanacs, Grace," said Alice, who could not keep from laughing to see her so full of merriment. Grace ran on up the hill to where her father was.

"She is a coarse hoyden of a creature, always ready to laugh or cry," said Ella, "but I like Grace very much after all. I could not have been half as good a girl as she is, if I had been in her place; her mother scolds so much, and whips for every little thing her children do, and never encourages them to do right. Many a time I have seen her bring her

hard, red hand down on Grace's back, till it would sound like knocking on a barrel full of something."

"Poor Grace! you ain't angry with her, are you, Allie?" said the girl, slipping her arm around Alice's waist.

"Oh, no! Poor Grace—she couldn't make me mad at her. I am sorry she has no encouragement, and no source from whence to draw comfort and pleasure, like we have. But I do wonder if Mr. Lee would turn his horses into this lot. I mean to ask him not to do it, and if he will, I will coax father to put a paling round the grave. It wouldn't take long, and we have some that were left over paling in the garden. I will have that done, surely."

In a few minutes Grace came back down the hill. She stopped and threw herself on the grass to rest and take breath.

"I was over the hill, getting a dollar of father," she said; "there is a peddler at the house, and I wanted a pair of gloves so bad, I had him wait while I ran up to get the money. Alice, I won't let pa put the horses in this lot; I was just in fun, honey, trying to scare you."

"Grace, did you see a young man who is wanting to engage a select school in the Glen?" said Mattie.

"Yes; he just started over to Mr. Williams's, as I left the house. Oh, but wasn't his a handsome face! Just the kind of eyes I love to see—large and dark and melting, like I imagine the beautiful Italian girls must have. I hope he may get the school; but I'd be ashamed to go, for I'm such a booby, I don't want any body to know that I am so dumb. Well, mother's to blame, keeping me at home about every other day to 'tend the cross young'uns; then my mind would get off my

books, and I'd forget as fast as I'd learn," and the beauty pouted her rosy lips and drew down her brows.

"Don't talk so, Grace, about your poor, weary mother, who has to work so hard, and always has had a family of little ones to worry her patience," said Alice.

"Oh, but all ma cares for is to get rich—grasping after all the world, as though she expected to take it on her back, along with her, like a tortoise does his house, home, goods, chattels, etc.; and then if any thing goes wrong, down comes her mallet of a fist on my dear devoted head. I expect I will soon be as bald as old grand'ther Williams," and she rattled away, regardless of the respect she would probably have felt for her mother had she reflected a moment.

"Gracie! Gracie!" called a stentorian voice, that echoed among the hills and dells like mimic voices in mockery.

"Oh, it's my darling sweet lark of a mother! I had forgotten. Sir Peddle Wagon must be tired waiting on me," and away she flew down the hillside, her white skirts fluttering in the wind, until she disappeared in the orchard, and was hidden from sight by the wilderness of bloom.

"Poor Grace! If we all go to school together this summer, let us love her all we can, and try and make smooth the rough corners of her generous nature; and perhaps, if she hears us speaking lovingly and reverently of our mothers every time, she may learn to venerate hers," said Alice.

"Oh!" said Ella, "if I'd hear any body speak as lightly of my poor ma as she does of hers, I am afraid I should be like mother Lee—I'd want to try my fist on them. I know it would not be right, but I could not restrain myself long enough to let my hasty temper subside."

"What a glorious example was our Saviour! If He was reviled, he reviled not again!—and when Judas, the false wretch, gave him the kiss of betrayal, he took it meekly and sweetly as though it were a kiss of pure and deep affection," said Mattie, in a low and sorrowful tone of voice, "and if we always kept Him before our minds, and tried to make our lives as much like His as possible, surely we would do right, and our lives would be a blessing to ourselves and all around us, whether friends or foes. Oh, it is a glorious thing to love our enemies, and seek to do them all the good we can, and keep their spiritual welfare before our eyes, side by side with our own!"

"Let us three," said Alice, "strive to do this; let us strengthen each other in every good work, and let us be as a cord three-fold strong;" and the good girl reached out her two hands in pledge, and took one of each in hers. "Let us be united in every good deed, laying hold of every duty incumbent upon us—let us strive to be cheerful and happy and useful, and use our influence in making others so; and may the blessing of God go with us, now and evermore!" "Amen!" said the three united voices earnestly, and, with a kind "good night," they separated for their homes.

Each one went home wiser and better and richer in spirit for the visit to that nameless grave!

And all this came from the influence of good mothers—mothers who trained their children to live and to die—taught them, in earliest childhood, that God loved the truthful and just and upright—and that in living correct and blameless lives, death finds us always ready, waiting, prepared.

CHAPTER XX.

Then she came
To the pure fount of God
And is athirst no more.

WILLIS.

There is a strength, deep bedded in our hearts,
Of which we reck but little, till the shafts of heaven
Have pierced its fragile dwelling.

MRS. HEMANS.

"Oh, do not talk in this way, Ethel," said Julia Clarke; "we have lived so happy since we came here, I cannot bear to think of ever going back to Keene, to the dull, empty life I have fled from. How sweet is the bread one earns and deserves;" and with a cheerful countenance she took up her embroidery, a dainty white dress sleeve for Alice Lisle.

"Julia, when I am gone, I wish you would go back to aunt Bradford's; and even if you prefer teaching, you could make their house your home," said Ethel, in a low voice; "for you know auntie loves you so, and uncle has no child and is so lonesome. Oh, I have much to be grateful for! God has been very good to me, and the coming rest will be so sweet! let me be buried in the quiet Glen, down in the corner where the

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willows wave over ground that has never been broken;" and the invalid's face brightened, and she looked lovely, with her exultant soul beaming from her eyes and glowing warmly in her cheeks.

"Don't talk so, Ethel, it grieves me," cried Julia.

"If your thoughts of the grave, and of heaven, and the blessed Saviour, were like mine, Julia, it would not give you pain. You are in the world, and its chains are thrown around you, and its syren songs charm, and its spell of enchantment enslaves you; and though you love God, and try to live near Him, the light and glory, that beameth out from the gates of the celestial city, reaches not to you, for your feet have not trod so long a distance as mine, and you are farther away."

"Oh, Ethel, when you die I shall feel as if I had nothing to live for, as if my support had been taken away from me and my path left dark and cheerless."

It is only for a little time, and then the re-union will never be broken. Oh, death has no sting, the grave holds nothing to weep and mourn over, if we look at the great change with the spiritual, instead of the earthly and tear-dimmed eyes."

Just then Cicely and Alice came in. Alice was as tall as her mother, and had a half woman half child way with her, that made her seem very interesting to those who do not admire the cultivated, easy, graceful, unblushing woman of the world, who has answers prepared and laid away for use, ready at a second's warning to pick up and appropriate each in its proper place. It is well enough, perhaps, to have stereotyped replies and remarks ready made, but we best love the frank, unstudied response or avowal, even if it be given with hesi-

tancy, or so brokenly that we have to supply the deficiencies in our own mind.

Cicely laid a kiss tenderly upon Ethel's brow, while Alice's was more earnestly and joyously given, because of the buoyant spirit of childhood.

They had been there but a few minutes, when Mina, Mr. Howland's help, came in, with a note from Jennie, saying that her father would be absent that day and she would be alone, and wished Julia would come and spend the day with her, if Ethel was able to spare her.

"You must go, Julia," said Cicely, "I will stay with Ethel till you come back."

"Mother, couldn't I go too?" said Alice, "you know Jennie always loved me, and I believe she would be glad to see me."

"Oh, no, dear, you know she sent for Julia alone."

"But, mother, I could stay and read in Mr. Howland's study, and time would pass like a dream, until Julia would be ready to return. I wouldn't trouble them at all."

"Oh, I can't go without her," said Julia. Ethel seconded the request, and Alice was to go.

"It hardly seems right to watch a chance to visit, while Mr. Howland is away—and oh, what, what a gulf is between Jennie and her father! I shudder to think of it," said Julia.

"It cannot seem to me that Jennie is insane any more than I am," said Ethel; "I am afraid it is but the greatness of her nature, while his is narrow and cannot measure half of hers, and hence he must conclude that the very strength of hers is weakness, and its great breadth and depth incomprehensible to him, which confirms him in the belief of her insanity. I believe such cases have transpired, and will so long as there

are minds towering as the cedars of Lebanon, and others stunted like little warped oaks; but bless God, the time will come when our loftiest aspirations will be sated—when minds will be appreciated to their fullest worth, and when all things will have worked together for good to them that love God."

Just as Julia and Alice had crossed the brook, and were walking down its winding course and gathering bunches of wild flowers, to give Jennie, they met the young man whom Alice had seen the day before at the grave.

"Ah, my little wood-nymph," said he, extending his hand with the warm, winning way of the southerners, "I shall believe you have no home or abiding place, unless it be to nestle at night under the drooping lilies, or plummy little pines, and hie away with the light of the morning to gather posies and mosses and vines, eh?" and he shook her hand heartily, and laughed low and sweet, as the ripple of a joyous rill.

Alice laughed and blushed, and turning around, introduced Julia.

He shook hands with her, and told Alice he was about to become a resident of the Glen, and should hereafter expect to be treated by her as one of her neighbors, or at least with the respect due her instructor.

"I am now going to look at the old church in which the school is to be held. Is it a pleasant place, Miss Alice, and shall I like it?"

"Pleasant!" said Alice, "it is the beauty-spot of the Glen. A sample of all of nature's most beautiful and sublime creations is there—artistically arranged, too. There is more of poetry in that sweet dimple of a nook, Glen Green Church, than you have ever read on one fair page before;" and her

eyes dilated, and gladness and an uplifting of soul looked out from every feature.

Julia was smiling at the young enthusiast, who stood with one little hand raised, and her curls pushed back from her face and forehead, her brown straw hat hanging on her shoulders by the knotted ribbon, forgetful that the person before her was but the passing acquaintance of a day. And he too—he stood, a rapture thrilling his soul that he had never felt or known—the child-woman was before him, and he could have knelt, enslaved by the spell she seemed to have flung around him. His heart leaped with the same joy that thrills the soul of the artist, when scenery, wild and grand and majestic, rises up before him, and he exults in the perfect picture, while his skillful hand traces it anew, with a beautiful and faithful creative power.

There was a charm in all she said—a grace in all she did; she seemed a rare flower, that no other place than wild, weird Glen Green could have fostered and nourished and nursed into such a glorious womanhood.

“I am so glad you came,” said Jennie, meeting the girls at the gate, and greeting them warmly, and looking as usual, except that her face was thin and pale, and wore a serener expression.

“I felt so lonesome to-day, Julia, that I thought you must come over; and, Alice, you are welcome, welcome,” she said, as Alice held up her bright face for a kiss.

“Miss Jennie,” said Alice, “I came to sit in the quiet study

and read, while you and Julia visit in your room. I do so love to get among the good books your father has—oh, I wish my pa had such a library;” and she ran in at the open door, and was flitting hither and thither like a bee in a flower garden.

Jennie’s room was perfectly neat and in order, nothing there which spoke of an ill-balanced or disordered mind; the best religious, scientific and poetical books were scattered around; flowers bloomed on the mantle and windows, and the clustering vines had been trained to come in and beautify her bower-room.

It was a peculiarity of Jennie’s nature to best love white flowers, especially lilies, which grew under her care as though her presence was sunshine and showers and dews. A vine of white morning-glories ran in at the window, and crept over the table of books, its snowy bells hanging profusely. A vase of fragrant white lilies stood on the table, and a favorite rose-shrub, full of white roses and swelling buds, was on the stand by the pillows of the bed, just where the pure white curtains were looped back.

On the snowy counter-pane lay an open volume of Bayard Taylor’s “Songs of the Orient.”

Julia took out her embroidery and sat by the window. From a basket of work, ready cut out into garments, Jennie took up a coarse shirt and seated herself on a low stool at Julia’s feet.

“Oh! don’t sit there, Jennie,” said Julia, as she drew a chair up beside her. But she only smiled and shook her head with a sorrowful look, that gave pain to the sensitive heart of Julia. She understood not the mystic meaning of the act or the shake of the head.

"Why, Jennie, are you taking in sewing to do for the neighbors?" said Julia, laughing. "I know your father wouldn't wear such a shirt as this."

"It is for a poor man who toils for his daily bread, and will be glad to wear as whole and good a garment as this will be. I cannot bear to be idle, or spend my time in a way which will be of no use to any one: it is wrong and wicked. God never meant we should drag out our lives uselessly, and as though it was a burden imposed upon us. I think when we have nothing to do for ourselves, we should labor for others; and if I were worth millions, I would want to earn and deserve and pay for my bread. It makes life seem sweeter, and we feel happier with ourselves and those around us."

"Dear Jennie," said Julia, leaning forward, her eyes sparkling beautifully, as she drew the fair face close to her, and kissed it warmly. "I love you for such sentiments. There is no need that I should toil thus myself. Though I am left an orphan, I was adopted into a wealthy family; but I felt my life was utterly useless. I was blessing none, cheering none, and not one in all the world was any better because I was born into it. Ethel's life had not been all smooth and pleasant like mine. Her lot had been to toil and struggle and suffer, but not 'to suffer and be strong,' as it is now."

"For her sake and mine, too, I gave up all the ease and indolence and vanity, that enwrapped me; and we came here, and the blessing of an approving God rests upon us warmly as the golden sunshine rests upon the earth. When I look back upon the past years, they seem like a blank, seem as though I had lived for nothing, like a trail of footsteps on the sandy beach, which the waves had passed over and washed

out of sight forever. And yet, I could not appreciate this present blessed life, had I not lived that which is past."

"How happy we might be together, Julia, if there were none to molest us, or make us afraid," said Jennie, and the genial sunshine of her heart broke out into a laugh at the absurd idea of her insanity. Only for a moment though, and then she resumed the calm, serene demeanor as she asked a question that had been trembling on her lip, like a drop of dew on a rose, ready to fall:

"Do you fear me, Julia, or are you not afraid of insane people?" and she looked steadily into her eyes.

"I see nothing to convince me of your insanity. Your room, and clothes, and work, and quiet, happy mind, and reasonable sentiments, all unite in proving your mental faculties active, healthy and well-balanced," said Julia.

"But do not people think me insane?"

"I believe the most of people do, and that a great many fear to meet you; but all love you, and hope for your recovery. Does your father seek medical advice for you, Jennie?"

"I do not see him very often; his business takes him away from home a good deal, and I stay in my own room nearly all the time. You are aware, from what passed in your presence, when my father came after me that afternoon, that he has erroneous views respecting society. He thinks position and wealth lifts its members above those who honorably work for a livelihood."

"I cannot agree with him; and though I have struggled against it, I find a barrier has sprung up between us two, the only members of the family living. Oh! it is such a pity, Julia, and it makes my heart ache to think of it, and to feel

that his displeasure rests upon me—my poor old father, whose life has been hedged in with burdens and crosses! God knows if I could put down this higher duty, I would be all in all to him. But I must do that which my Father in heaven will approve and bless. My sympathies are all with the lowly and poor and erring and struggling and honest; my heart rebels at the injustice of society—those who by a mere turn of fate have the poor under their control, and they must succumb or starve. I cannot coincide with his high English ideas of caste. Though he torture me, I will still persevere in doing my duty to God and humanity,” and the noble girl rose and with her hands tightly interlocked, paced across the soft, plushy carpet of her room. Her lips were ashy pale, and the blue veins in her forehead were swollen and distinctly visible.

“Julia,” she said, pausing, “will you be my friend, if I ever need one in whom to trust? Can you sympathize with me, and will you be willing to assist me in case I should need your counsel and aid?”

“So far as is good and right and just, Jennie, I will do all that lies in my power,” and she laid her hand in the little open palm before her.

“Well, the first favor I have to ask under the new pledge is, that you will carry or send a parcel for me to Mr. Armstrong’s, a poor family to whom I feel indebted. They live across those two fields to the left of our house. There are some things in this that they need. He has a family of six children and is a poor renter, and his wife has ill health. There is not a day passes in which I do not think of them. Perhaps I can get this shirt finished to send with the other

things,” and she sat down and took up her sewing and went to work briskly.

“You would be happier, Jennie, to go out into the world, as I have done, and earn your living by toil, and be free and independent. There would be no thralldom then, binding you, as there is now,” said Julia.

“I have no doubt of it, Julia, but I could not leave father, even though he should hate me; for he is all that I have to cling to now in this world, and oh, my mother did love him so, and he was so kind to her! I must remember he is my father, even if not one thought of his and mine are in harmony; and I must do all I can for him. It will not be long that I shall have to wait for the great rest of heaven. It seems not far away; and then when I come to die it will be sweet to remember that I have been as kind to him as I could be, and to have his hand smooth my pillow, and his face bend over me, and his kindest, forgiving words fall upon my ear. He will love me then, and the barrier will be removed, and the gulf will be bridged, and his hand will hold mine when I go down into the valley of the shadow of death. Oh! I wish it had been so that I would never, never have had to deceive him!”

Mina served up dinner in the room joining Jennie’s.

When Mr. Howland was gone the hired girl always sat at the table with Jennie; but when he was at home, she waited until they had eaten and left the room.

He could with impunity violate the principles of honesty and justice, but never would he violate the prim rules laid down by society, to keep the distinction between the rich and the poor, the aristocrat and the bond-servant.

In the evening when Alice and Julia were getting ready to

go home, Alice slid a chair up to the book-case, and got on it to replace a volume of Shakspeare on the top shelf, from which she had taken it. To put it just where she had found it, she had to take down an old volume of Byron. It was a large book, and in reaching it down it fell, and a letter shook out from among the leaves. Jennie picked it up, and was putting it back again, when the superscription caught her eye. It was directed to herself, and the chirography was not familiar.

"Why, this is an old letter of mine, I see, and it is one I have forgotten," said she, as she saw it was mailed in Albion, Michigan.

After Julia and Alice were gone, she drew her chair up to her chamber window, and took the letter from her pocket. It was the identical one that James Hamilton had written her seven long years before, the one her father had taken from the office and read, and never given her.

Angel of mercy! fold thy white wings tenderly about her, for the thorny crown pierces sharply into her temples, and she hath much need of love and pity!

Her evil star seems to hang low in the horizon now.

"Oh, what sweet words! What can this mean? I never saw this precious letter, and yet it has been broken open and read. Seven long, *long* years since it was written! He loved me then—does he love me now? How I have hungered and thirsted and panted and prayed for such a letter from him! Oh, God! is it too late?" and the frantic girl wrung her hands in agony. How strong she felt then! Her step was springy and light, and every muscle seemed to be a wiry cord, stretched to its utmost tension.

Her mind was made up: she would learn his address and

write to him. She put on a dark brown dress and shawl, and drew a cape bonnet close about her face, and started down to Wendall, although it was quite dusk then.

She went to Mrs. Whitfield's, and as soon as Metta and her mother saw her enter the door, her pale, wild face frightened them, and screaming, they ran over to the store, and begged Mr. Whitfield to go to the house and persuade her to go home again. He started to cross the street, when he met her coming over.

"Hadn't you better go home, Jennie? it's getting late," said he.

"I came down to see Mrs. Whitfield," said she, mildly. "Why did she leave the room as soon as I came into it?"

"Why, she is so foolish about crazy people," said he, "she always gets out of their way."

"Does she feel afraid of me?" said Jennie, her lip quivering, as she strove to keep back the tears.

"Shall I walk home with you, Jane?" said he, pitying the poor girl.

"Oh, no; it's not far, and I am not afraid to go alone. I wish to see her only a moment," and she hesitated; but Mr. Whitfield walked to the store, and she followed him. As she entered the door, Mrs. Whitfield called out:

"Oh, Whitfield! I shall faint! I shall faint! Take her away, quick!"

"I know she will kill us!" screamed Metta, running behind the counter, and creeping down among kegs of rice and tobacco.

"I know she's after laudanum, father, and you must watch her until she goes clear out of town," said Metta.

Jennie stood by the door, crying softly.

"Has she gone, pa?" whined out Metta.

"Silence, you great simpleton. She had more sense the day she was three years old than you and your mother both have now," said the incensed husband.

Blubbing and tears followed this unlooked for outburst; and Jennie, feeling embarrassed, bade Mr. Whitfield a kind "good evening," and left the store.

"If you will permit me, Jennie, I will see you home safe," he said, as she turned away; but she thanked him, and declined the civility.

Mr. Whitfield was angry, and opening the door, he said, "You dunces! go home now, and for humanity's sake, try hereafter and treat your superiors with respect! Shame!—I would rather see you run from a pet lamb than from that noble girl. Only think! to run shrieking over here as though an enraged lioness was on your track!"

Jennie remembered that Mrs. Barnes was James's sister, and she could learn his correct address from her. She took the precaution to gather her bonnet closer about her face, that she might not be recognized. She met Mrs. Barnes coming out of the gate, and in a low voice she asked for Hamilton's address, saying she had a letter to send, and had forgotten the correct one.

Mrs. Barnes told her, and then invited her into the house; but Jennie, anxious to pass unknown, excused herself, and walked homeward.

His sister had carelessly remarked, "He is at home with mother," and that made her hope he was still unmarried. At any rate, married or not, she would write to him. If he was

wed, he would then free her from all unjust imputation that he might have cast upon her silence—if unmarried and free, and he loved her still, then would she share his humble lot with him, and in her great joy forget that she had ever drank of sorrow's cup.

Before her head pressed her pillow that night, a long letter was written and sealed and directed, ready to send the next morning. What a prayer did she pour out that night, before she retired! How earnestly did she hope that all would be well with her, and that the love which had been tendered her seven long years before, was still garnered up for her alone! And yet, seven years, long, weary years, might have worked wondrous changes!

It was past one o'clock when she retired that night, and her father had not yet returned. In the morning when she rose, he was sitting reading, and breakfast was nearly ready. He was often absent a day and a night at a time, but always returned home before daylight. His nocturnal visits were mysterious to Jennie, and caused her many a troubled hour. He scrutinized her face closely when she sat down to the table, though he said nothing. She had not been down stairs to breakfast for several days before; but now life seemed to have new charms, and she moved around with a light step, and the great change *would* show itself in her countenance. She meant to tell her father sometime of the new deception she had discovered, but the time had not yet come.

"I think I will walk out this morning, it looks so pleasant, and I feel as if it would do me good," she said, as she rose from the table and walked to the door. The summer dews sparkled on every blade of grass, and glistened in the sun-

rays, and all nature looked as though risen from a glorious baptism of beauty.

"It is too wet to go out now, Jane; wait till nearly noon," said her father, looking at her closely.

She knew the mail would close at eight in the morning, and the letter must go out in it.

"It will be so warm then; now it is so cool and refreshing!" she replied.

"One don't need refreshing just after waking from sleep!" said he sneeringly.

"Have you any errand you want done—stockings to send to some old hag? Or do you have a special errand at the druggists? If you have any such worthy callings to be attended to, I am at your service, Miss," and he bowed with mock courtesy.

Poor Jennie! She was only human. Anger rose up rebellious, in spite of her low "Peace—be still," and her eyes flashed until they looked black, as she said:

"My errands are not of a nature in which I have to sneak off and spend a day and a night—I don't wait for the cover of darkness to hide my evil deeds."

The words had not died off her lips until she felt a pang of remorse, and remembered she was talking to her father; she raised her hand to lay on his arm, and took a step forward to bend down and kiss him, and ask his forgiveness, when, quick as thought, he rose and struck her violently on the breast, and she fell to the floor heavily.

Then he flung her lifeless form across his arm and carried her up stairs.

As he lifted the pillow to put under her head, the letter she had written fell from under it upon the carpet.

He wet her face with camphor, and rubbed her hands; and as soon as signs of returning life were visible, he took up the letter, looked at the superscription, and left the room with it in his hands.

"Mina! Mina!" was the low, piteous sound that fell upon Mina's ear, as she sat at her breakfast. She sprang up stairs, and found Jennie lying on the bed, unable to lift her hands to her face to wipe away the blood that stained her lips. The good girl wet a towel in the wash-bowl, and washed her face; then wet her head and face and hands in camphor, and rubbed her gently, as with pallid lips she asked what was the matter?

"I got such a hard fall—oh! my breast!" gasped the suffering girl, with difficulty.

Mina fixed her comfortably in bed, and said she must be bled, and that she would have Mr. Howland go for the doctor.

"Please, Mina, come close," she whispered, and her words were broken with the sharp pain in her breast.

Mina bent her head down low to catch the words, "Look under—my—pillow—for a letter—all about the bedstead—under the stand—look—" she said with effort.

Mina looked as directed, but could not find it.

"Oh! you *must*—find it, Mina. Look again." And again did the girl search under the pillows, and bed, and on the

stand, and under and in the books, but it was no where to be found.

"Where's father, Mina?"

"In the study, reading."

"Reading what? a book, or paper?"

"He took a letter out of his pocket, and broke the seal and sat down to read it, just before I came up here," and she began to see into the mystery.

"Oh! I do feel so bad, Mina," and the blood steeped her lips afresh in crimson; and she tried to keep back the tears that would flow, as she thought of the cruelty and injustice of her father.

Mina called to Mr. Howland, but he did not come up. She ran down, and in no very pleasant tone told him she was afraid Jennie would die, if something was not done immediately.

"Shall I go for Dr. Hammond?" said he, looking up from the letter he was reading.

"Why yes!—if you love and pity your poor child, try and have something done for her soon. It is not my place, Mr. Howland, to dictate to you in a matter of this kind," and she looked sharply at him with wonder and anger in her bright black eyes.

In half an hour good old Dr. Hammond was there, with his hand on her wrist, and his lips parted in consternation.

"She is in a very critical situation! Her life hangs as by a single thread! She has by the fall sustained a severe internal injury, from which she will never wholly recover; but with extreme caution and attentive nursing, and kept free from excitement, may be able to sit up a little in a few days."

"A very unfortunate occurrence," he said, looking at Mr. Howland, who sat in the door.

"Jane seems to have been born to misfortune," was the reply, without raising his eyes.

The doctor prescribed, recommended careful nursing, spoke cheerfully to Jennie, and saying he had a patient to visit at ten o'clock, and would call again in the afternoon, took his leave.

As he rode off he said to himself, "Strange how she could meet with such an injury, and fall without striking on her breast."

"Father, did you find a letter about my bed, addressed to James Hamilton?" said Jennie, in a low voice, as her father rose to leave the room.

"I did, Jane; but we will waive the subject, and take it up some time when you are better able to talk. Who would you prefer should be your nurse, to take care of you, while you need one?"

There was no reply. She was striving to still the tumult of grief and madness that rose up in her breast, and to keep back the hot tears that filled her eyes.

"Will you give me the letter, father? No; I do not ask you to give it to me, but I *demand* it."

"Demand! pooh! be quiet, as the doctor bid you. Who did you say you preferred for a nurse, Jane?"

"I don't want any papa!—I have nothing to live for. I had rather die and put an end to this torture. It is dreadful to live unloved and uncared for even by one's nearest relative, and God knows my friends are become my enemies! I thank you, father, but please don't get a nurse. It would be better

for you and me both, that this *accident* should terminate my poor existence."

Mr. Howland left the room, and went into the garden, and there, among the beautiful flowers, his good angel came to him, in the wonderful loveliness of the blooming roses and dahlias and petunias; like disguised angels, ministered to his strange, hard nature, and made his heart for a few moments as susceptible as a pure maiden's.

He sat down in a bower at the end of the garden, and closed his eyes on all the earth, while the sweet breezes played with his hair, and came to him laden with a rich freight of fragrance. There was only one inlet into his cold spirit, and that was through the beauty and poetry and perfect loveliness of earth. All else seemed harsh and unmeaning and inharmonious—so utterly dead in his bosom were all the noble impulses that leap to life, and warm and glow and thrill the natural affections.

The climbing roses that covered the arbor, swung in pendant tassels and sprays before the entrance; and as he opened his eyes and looked upon them, his close thin lips parted in a smile, gleeful as a happy babe's, and he laughed strangely sweet, as the warm wind tossed and dallied with the flowers, and rustled their green leaves. Such a trifling little gleam of the merely beautiful in nature could stir up new emotions, and give momentary joy, when, alas! his only child, who was starving for his love, could not gain entrance into his holiest affections, or secure his coöperation in the highest pursuits in which she could engage. Alas! for father and child.

After he had left the room, Jennie lay as silent as the dead, thinking what to do—try and live, or try and die. She

thought of the incident of the preceding day, the finding of the precious letter, and she resolved to do all the kind physician had recommended, and recover, so as to be able to write a few lines to James as soon as she could sit up in bed. If Julia were only there, she could trust her to write to him.

In two hours the doctor returned, and as she heard his step upon the stairs, her face brightened up, and she said aloud, "I'll do it."

Her father came in with the doctor. A tenderer expression was on his face, and his tread was slow and careful, as though he felt he was near one who was on the verge of the grave.

The doctor cautioned her against excitement, or trying to sit up or turn in bed, and left some powders for her to take often through the day and night, that she might sleep and keep quiet.

"It will be necessary, Mr. Howland, that she has a nurse, to be in her room all the time, to watch that she does not try to move about in bed, and to give the opiates regularly. I saw Miss Julia Clarke going home from Mr. Armstrong's, and as we came down the lane together, I told her about Miss Jennie being so ill; and had it not been for her sick sister, she would have come right over.

"That's a charming girl, Mr. Howland. She's a born lady, and is refined and intellectual and accomplished, highly. Jennie would soon be well if she had such a nurse as Julia. I do not wish to be meddlesome, but if you had asked my advice, I would tell you to get a good girl, say Myra Willis, to stay with Ethel Clarke, and let Julia come here for a few days. She is a faithful nurse, and besides can read and sing and play and converse—just the very counterpart of Jennie,

there. Miss Jennie don't need medicine as much as she needs cheerful companionship and watchful care."

"I am very willing, doctor, and will send Mina over to make the arrangement with Julia. Understand, I do not second this idea of yours, that Jane may have a companion, but merely a competent nurse. My opinions regarding society and its different classes do not hang at loose ends, like yours, doctor," and the old English gentleman straightened up his head and leaned back in his chair.

"I know it! I know it!" and the doctor shook his head and looked at Jennie, saying, "while we are talking of guarding against excitement, we must be careful to introduce subjects that will not produce it," and he laughed; but Jennie closed her eyes and pretended not to hear or feel any interest in what was passing.

She was delighted that Julia was to be her nurse, and wondered at her father's willingness to allow her to come; and yet she knew he felt a pride in bringing the beautiful girl into his house as a hireling, a nurse, who was to be paid at the end of the week, the same as Mina and the stable boy and the men who worked on the farm.

That night Julia came over. She did inquire much about the fall that had been so near a fatal one to Jennie, for she saw that it gave her pain to talk about it; and she thought there might be facts connected with it which she would rather conceal.

She read to Jennie, and played the piano, and sang, and did all she could to please her, and keep her quiet. Jennie was called an accomplished pianist; and Mr. Howland was struck

with wonder when he heard Julia's playing far excel Jennie's in point of sweetness and skill.

"These apes!" he muttered, "why can't they stay in their own bounds."

The next morning early, when Jennie had slept off the effects of the last opiate, and felt better, she told Julia about the letter she had found, taking special care not to criminate or blame her father, in the least, and asked her to write as she would dictate, and they would send Mina down to the office early, that it might go out in that morning's mail. Julia was happy to have it in her power to gratify her friend so much, and it was with extreme pleasure she wrote a brief letter after Jennie's dictation.

Mina was dispatched in due time with it, and told to drop it into the office slyly, and on no condition to tell any person what her errand was.

Mr. Howland was very shrewd, and he mistrusted that Jennie would not be thwarted in anything she wished to accomplish; and as he stood back, looking out of his study window that morning, he was not surprised to see Mina slip out with her silk apron and shiny gaiters on, and go in the direction of Wendall.

What fiend incarnate did possess the hard-hearted wretch, none can tell. But he laughed derisively, and whispered, "That girl's will could almost move a mountain," and putting on his hat he walked in an opposite direction, until he was out of sight of the house, then turned and took a road that led into Wendall.

He staid in Whitfield's store, until he saw Mina leave the village; then he hurried over to the office, saying:

"I sent a letter to the office this morning, and neglected putting in the most important item. Is it too much trouble to let me have it again?"

"No trouble at all, sir," said the official, bowing obsequiously, and returning him the letter.

He took it, and putting it in his pocket, returned home the same way he had come, no one aware that he had left the house.

And while Jennie was rejoicing that the great burden of her soul had gone, like the dove to its ark of rest, and Julia, happy in the hope that the light of a glorious day was about to dawn upon her unfortunate friend, he, the wily one, was exulting that her plan was frustrated, and that her designs had to yield to his shrewder scheming.

Jennie slowly recovered. Had her father loved her and studied to do her good, and make her happy, he could not have promoted her happiness more than to have permitted her the society of the winsome and affectionate Julia.

Ethel was still able to be up nearly all day, but not to work. As the springtime ripened into summer, the heat grew oppressive, and her strength failed her; but her spiritual strength grew stronger, and the love of the blessed Saviour was the one glorious theme on which she dwelt, until the lustre of her eyes was heavenly, and the pale rose tint bloomed on her sweet face, and made her look radiantly beautiful.

Oh! there is no beauty like that of a pure spirit, warm with the love of God, seen through a face that is haggard with poverty, or stained with tears, or scarred with disease, and seamed with suffering! The poor, homely face is not

seen; it is a transparent casket in which lies a shining pearl of great price.

Mr. Howland was struck with amazement when he opened the letter that he had taken from the office. The penmanship gave unmistakable evidence of genius, and of a finished education. He could hardly believe it possible that a woman like Julia, who toiled for a daily subsistence, had ever stood in the same position he occupied in society.

The language of the letter he knew to be Jennie's—frank, plain, honest and beautiful, and true to the highest aims of a noble womanhood. He was jealous that she dared to love any one more than himself. He had never told her of the great change in Hamilton's circumstances; but he meant to as soon as she would recover.

"I could not desire a better companion for Jane than Julia is, if the girl only filled the place in society she is fitted for," thought Mr. Howland. But these honest convictions did not abate his stately manner towards her, or lessen his coldness. She slept in Jennie's room, and sometimes ate there, but generally at the table with Mina and the hired men. She spent awhile at home every day with Ethel.

Julia and Mina visited the postoffice regularly, and two weeks had elapsed, and still no tidings came from James Hamilton.

Alas! hope deferred maketh the heart sick!

CHAPTER XXI.

"I saw thee stand
 With but a few brief summers o'er thy head,
 And in the consecrated courts of God
 Confess thy Saviour's name. And they who marked
 The deep devotion and the high resolve
 Of that young half-blown bud, did wondering ask
 What its full bloom must be."

THE old church abated not from its picturesque appearance since the new regulations had been made, and twenty-five grown girls and boys duly installed in it as pupils.

They entered with zest into their studies, and all loved their teacher, and every day he blest the fates that had led him to this charming retreat. In the childlike simplicity and poetical attributes of Alice's nature, he always found something new and pleasing. If she missed a day from school, that day would drag wearily, and the lessons would be dull and tedious, and his usual serenity of mind would be disturbed, if that seat, by the far window which was overhung with ivy, was vacant.

He knew he loved that fair face, round which clustered and hung the long bright curls, and that her soul was spotless as a babe's; and sometimes in the quiet of his own room at night he would lay down the volume he was reading, and close his

eyes, and an indefinable yearning to possess the love of Alice, her first love, would sweep over his soul, and he would rise and pace the room and strive to still the wild thought.

"It can not, must not be!" he would say. "She is too pure, too good to mate with me! My soul is blackened with—with perjury and crime! Ah, God and the angels call it *crime*. I wrong her even to love her silent presence, and it must not be!

"With good resolves for the future did I come here into this sacred spot. I feel that Glen Green is a sanctuary, and all its inhabitants are worshipers. Let me be as they are, and let me leave them bearing their love and respect;" and he compressed his lips as though setting a seal on his vow, and endeavored thereafter to walk in the narrow path he had marked out.

For a fortnight he kept his resolution bravely, though sometimes it was shaken if, in Alice's leaning over his chair to show him a problem she could not solve in algebra, her curls touched his shoulder or swept past his cheek, or, if by accident her little warm hand touched his, then would he wish he dared gather back the curls and gaze into her sweet face, or take her hand in his and feel the electric thrill that betokened congeniality.

One Sabbath in the latter part of June, Alice, and Mattie, and Ella were baptized into the church of which Mr. Phillips was the pastor. It was a touchingly beautiful scene. To please Alice and the old parson, the ceremony was not performed in the house, as was customary. They walked out of the church over to the fountain, among the rocks in the dense shade of the pines. The people congregated on the banks,

and on both sides of the brook, and on the rocks above and beside the fountain. The minister offered an earnest prayer, and men stood with uncovered heads, and women looking down with reverently closed eyes, and the little children with quiet folded hands.

Oh, it seemed the blessed angels hovered unseen among the tasseled branches of the gently waving pines, so deep a solemnity rested upon the assembly!

The three girls stood beside the gray-haired old man, all dressed in spotless white, without any ornament save a wreath of white lilies with glossy leaves and winding stems.

The rocks just below the gushing stream were large, and lay in a rude circular manner so as to form a kind of basin. The rim was mossy, over which the crystal water fell like a huge cup over-brimming; the slanting sunbeams fell between the branches in long golden bars of sunshine, into the flowing rill that sparkled and skimmed adown its stony channel.

When the prayer closed and the time had come for the baptism, the three girls knelt with downcast eyes beside him, while the baptismal font, the mossy rock basin, was on his other side.

The shadows of the pines fell full upon them, but a yellow beam of sunshine gleamed tremblingly upon the white forehead and brown curls of Alice, and as the consecrated water trickled down her brow and settled in pelucid drops upon her bare neck and shoulders, and ran down her curls, the sunshine seemed to transform it into bright and sparkling gems.

How ethereally beautiful she looked; and as the old pastor with the long grey hair, reverently laid his hand on her brow in blessing, the bright drops seemed to be as a crown of jewels

commingling with the lily-garland, and a radiant light seemed to shine about her head.

Ernest Carrol stood leaning with his elbow upon a jutting rock, and when the pastor was pronouncing the blessing, the tears streamed down his cheeks, and all the holiness of spirit which was his, rose up in his soul and bore him above every earth-stained thought or desire.

When the benediction was pronounced, he stepped across to where the three girls were, and bowing, with his fine eyes still dewey with tears, drew Alice's arm within his own on one side, and Ella's on the other. Mattie's home lay in an opposite direction, and she went in company with her mother. They were all too deeply affected to talk.

When they came to the green lane that led to Ella's home, she turned off, and Ernest and Alice were left alone.

The glowing picture was still before him, of the baptism, and would be all through life, just as perfect as any artist could have delineated, while the spirit of poesy had cast a halo of loveliness around it that no human power could have given it, no child of song could have created out of the beautiful imagery that peopled his mind.

Alice wore a white veil thrown over her head, the same one her mother had worn on her bridal morning; and as Ernest looked down at her face when he was speaking, he thought he had never seen a vision of such perfect beauty.

"Alice," said he, stopping and taking her hand that lay on his arm, "the memories of to-day will never, never leave my mind for one hour, while I live! I never saw a maiden look so gloriously beautiful as you did and do to-day. I thought

of an angel crowned with glory, when I looked upon you kneeling in that sacred place."

"Please, Ernest, don't talk this way, it will frighten away the precious thoughts that had come with soft wings and folded themselves in my breast. My cup is full to-day; don't take it from my lips and give me to drink of that which hath no reality," she said, as if murmuring in a dream. "Will you not give me your blessing, too?" and she bowed her head.

He laid one of his hands on her fair young brow, and his sweet voice was tremulous, as he closed his eyes, and lifting the other hand toward Heaven, said,

"Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God."

And he could have gone no farther, for his voice was stifled with emotion.

In a moment he spoke low: "Alice, dear Alice, I am not worthy to take your little hand in mine; yours is pure, and mine is stained; your soul is white, and mine is sullied; your experience is framed in by these grand old hills, and this breadth of blue sky that stretches over Glen Green; crime, and wrong, and wickedness stalk abroad like ravenous beasts, but you know it not except through rumor, and then you comprehend it not. Dear Alice! white, white dove that has never left its home-nest! No sins had you to renounce at the baptismal font to-day, no nearer could you get to God and the angels than you are already!"

"Don't, don't, Ernest! Would not you, my teacher, my friend, guard me and help me to be true and good, and live so that God would smile upon and bless me?" said Alice, stopping and looking fully into his face.

"God knows I would, Alice, and that I love you, and you

are dearer to me than all the world beside! *My Alice!*" and he drew her to his bosom and kissed her white forehead again and again, passionately.

"Why do you love me, Ernest?" she said; and her cheeks were crimsoned with blushes, though she looked up into his eyes.

"Because you are good and pure, Alice, and innocent, and when I am in your presence I feel so secure, and as though the light of heaven and the smile of God were beaming upon me," said he, earnestly. "Do you love me, Alice?" and his voice was low and sweet, and he bent his head to catch the reply.

"I am agitated now, let me be composed—every thing seems so strange and new!" and she rubbed her forehead.

"Dear child!" he said, as he drew her arm within his, and walked on.

Cicely had tea waiting out on the cool, vine-covered porch, and Mr. Lisle sat reading the Bible. Ernest endeavored to make himself very agreeable in conversation with Mr. Lisle, and his intimate acquaintance with all phases of society, and all the passions of the human heart, contributed largely in favoring him. He had a way of winning respect that none but a polished man of the world could have. He would draw one's opinions from them, and treat them with the greatest consideration and respect. Thus making even the shy and illiterate man or woman feel no inferiority in his presence, but perfectly at ease and freedom, and on an equality with his vastly superior attainments.

Cicely complained of weariness, and retired early that evening. The golden wheat harvest was to be commenced

the next morning, and Mr. Lisle excused himself on the plea of needing plenty of rest, when his work was so laborious; and he too retired early to his chamber.

They had all been sitting on the porch; and through the clustering grape-vines that covered the lattice, the moonlight gleamed in and fell brokenly upon the floor in bright patches.

"Alice," said Ernest, seating himself beside her on the sofa, "let my eyes rest upon whatever they may, or even if I close them, and make all darkness, that picture of to-day is before me. I believe it is daguerreotyped in my brain," and he closed his eyes and leaned down his head until his beautiful hair curled upon her shoulder and neck; and then he talked as though soliloquizing:

"How sweetly did the drooping white lily bells and the glossy green leaves nestle among her curls, on her fair neck and blue-veined temples! That ray of golden sunshine was both an emblem and a symbol—ah! and prophetic too. In the Glen and in the great upheaving mass of humanity, is she like a gleam of sunshine. She is that to me also. Prophetically, her life will be all sunshine—there must be no shadow, no cloud—no, not even of the size of a dove's wing! Dear, dear Alice! Now you are composed, tell me if you love me."

The child-woman burst into tears, and flung her white arms about his neck, and cried on his bosom.

He held her, nestling close as a frightened bird, to his breast, smoothed her curls and hushed her tearful emotion.

"Now tell me, Alice, *my* Alice, do you love me?"

"More than I love father or mother or any one on this earth, dear Ernest!" and she looked up into his face with an innocent, trusting gaze that thrilled to his heart.

Closer he gathered her in his arms, and kissed her lips and cheeks and forehead, and called her his good angel, and his darling, and his light, and his day-star, and his white dove.

"And now let us talk together," she said, seating herself composedly, with a great, new love light beaming from her eyes and playing about her lips.

"Ernest," she said, "is this right? We are only acquaintances of a month. Are we prudent in loving each other? You are one who has seen much of the world, and much of life. You are educated; I am not. Our tastes may be very different, though now they seem one. You move in society in which I never expect or care to be recognized. I am humble, lowly-born; and yet it could not be that you would dare to wrong me by professions which are not real. I believe you to be good and pure and sincere, and I am proud of you," and she laid her hand in his confidently.

"Alice, I would not wrong your noble soul by breathing into your ear one word that was not the language of sincerity and truth. You come up to my ideal of a perfect womanhood now, and you are little more than a child; and oh! if such rich promise be now, in your young years, what a harvest will the future bring forth! My life has not been all that it should be. I grieve to say it to you, best beloved, and still I would keep nothing back. I had rather give full confidence and receive the same in return. Alice, will you be mine—mine forever in this life? I cannot live without you. Your presence is as necessary to my existence as is my breath. Do not let me leave Glen Green alone, as I came into it, a waif upon the winds, blown hither and thither, without any great purpose, or hope, or aim in life! Go with me, darling,

and bless and cheer and comfort me with your presence and your sweet words.

"Oh, Alice! it was a good angel who first directed my steps hither. I knew who and what you were, and that you held my happiness in your keeping, when I first met you at the grave in the wild woods," and he drew her to his bosom and kissed her glowing cheeks passionately.

"Dear, dear Ernest! this is so new to be loved and blessed. I thank God that you are mine—all mine! I will do all I can to make you happy. I will live only for you; wherever you go, I will go; your people shall be my people, and your God my God," and she timidly pressed a kiss upon his beautiful forehead.

"How calm you are, Alice. Most women would blush and faint and murmur indistinct words and be——"

"Be prudes," said Alice, laughing and finishing the sentence.

"Just so, darling! mine! my fresh white lily, as pure as unsunned snow!" and he held her off, and looked at her face until she blushed and released herself; for the deep, tender gaze of his eyes was gone, and they sparkled with a penetrating glow that was not pleasing.

They talked of the home that was to be theirs. He had sufficient means to purchase a property in the Glen, which he preferred to taking her away from the home of her childhood, and among strangers.

"We will call our home Eden, won't we, Allie?" said he, looking tenderly upon the fair creature by his side.

"Yes, if you say so, Ernest; but we will try to make it an Eden."

"So we will," he said, "for merely calling it Eden wouldn't make one of it, unless love and goodness combine with beauty in forming it."

"Ernest, I am thinking I will not go to school any more," remarked Alice.

"Why? I won't teach any longer if you don't. Why, mine?"

"Oh! I am afraid the scholars will see that you are all the world to me, and I don't want them to know it."

"Oh! you must go, Alice. I had rather the light of the sun should be withdrawn, than the light of your two soft eyes."

She innocently laid her open hands on each side of his face and leaned her cheek down to his, in the playful way that children caress babes, and laughed at his pretty flattery.

"Have you ever written poetry, Ernest?" she asked, smiling, as the metaphor still lingered in her mind.

"Yes; I used to write tolerable songs in my younger years. It has been a long time since I have tried to write any; but since I came to the Glen, I have been tempted many times. To-day I felt the old tide of poesy sweep through my being, and every pulse thrilled with rapture, deeper than I ever knew before.

"Oh, Alice! my day is just dawning now. I thank God that I came to the Glen, and that I have won you. Mine, mine! You will lift my soul into the same sphere with your own, and bear it heavenward. You will guide me, and lead my wayward feet to walk in the same pleasant way your own have always trod. To-morrow evening after school, I will come up here and talk with your father and mother, and ask

their consent to our union. And now, Alice, love, let us ask God to smile upon and bless us in our new relation to each other, and to make us useful in our day, and a blessing to all about us."

And they knelt beside the sofa, one arm encircling her waist, their heads bowed in silence a few minutes, when they rose and he bade her a tender farewell, and went to his boarding house.

After he had gone, and his footsteps died away in the little graveled walk that led to the gate, Alice sat down in the rocker in the moonlight, which wrapped her as in a tissue of silvery gauze, and mused on the past few hours. No thought of flattery or deception or insincerity, crossed her mind. She sat and wept a prayer of gratitude to God for permitting her to enjoy such great happiness, the precious gift of being beloved by one noble and gifted and good, and superior to any person she, in her little life, had ever known or seen. The words of her favorite poet came into her mind. Never before had she felt their truth and completeness; and tears of joy bedewed her cheeks as she thought of them:

I have enough, oh God! My heart to-night
Runs over with its fullness of content.
I am blessed to overflowing.

Thou who look'st

Upon my brimming heart this tranquil eve,
Knowest its fullness, as Thou dost the dew,
Sent to the hidden violet by Thee;
And, as that flower from its unseen abode
Sends its sweet breath up, duly, to the sky,
Changing its gift to incense, so, oh God!
May the sweet drops that to my humble cup
Find their far way from heaven, send up to Thee
Fragrance at thy throne welcome.

CHAPTER XXII.

To thine own self be true,
And it must follow as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.

HAMLET.

"Oh! this is good news, father," said mother Phillips, the pastor's wife, as she pushed her glasses up above her brow, and wiped her eyes and folded the letter she had been reading. "Either to-night, or to-morrow; well, I must have everything in order, and just as he likes to see and have," and she laid the letter carefully in the old Bible, and went off to the kitchen to tell the girl that dear Frank was coming home that evening or the next day, from school, and there must be some nice cakes baked, and some pies and puddings made, and some fat hens ready to treat him to a chicken pie for dinner.

"Bless my stars! ain't I glad now?" said the good old creature, who had dandled Frank Phillips on her knee when he was an infant. "The dear boy, may the Lord bless his sweet face! Let me see, mother, how old is the baby now?" and she propped both hands up against her round sides, and drew down her brows, and her lips moved while she tried to

count up how many years it was since she had the cholera, the great era in her tame life, for it was just the summer after that she came to live at Mr. Phillips's, and Frank was born the following autumn.

"Frank will be twenty-one next October," said Mrs. Phillips, as she raised a white, folded table-cloth that was spread over the bread bowl, and peeped in to see if the dough was light enough to mould into loaves.

"Let us have everything our very best and nicest now, Molly," she said to the woman; "so that his visit will be very pleasant to think over when he goes back to school."

"Oh, my! how long before the child will gravitate, mother? it does seem so lonesome to have him away from us so much."

"*Graduate*, is the right word, Molly; oh, in just one more year!" and telling her what to do, she left the kitchen and went out into the parlor where Mr. Phillips sat.

The poor widow for whom the donation party had been made at the parsonage three or four years before, had just come in, and was sitting talking with the parson.

"Good morning, Mrs. Wells," said mother Phillips, "how is your health and that of your dear children?"

The woman tossed her head with a silly smirk, that made her seem repulsive, as she replied to the kind inquiry.

She wore a new and fashionably small bonnet, trimmed with great side bows of gay lilac ribbon, and a huge bunch of red cottony flowers on each side of her face. Her neck, brown and skinny and flabby, was bare—a bow of crimson ribbon was pinned on her breast, so that the two fluttering ends stuck out like the great shiny wings of a monster dragon fly, that had just lit on her bosom. A new white ruffled apron, was

conspicuous, and new patent leather shoes, with high heels, were more than visible from under the frayed hem of a gay, wide-striped, green and black, delaine dress. She wore one hoop, and in sitting down and spreading out, to make the most show, her dress was lifted up at the sides, displaying an unhemmed and slit and ravelled-out flannel petticoat, bah! "a whited sepulchre filled with dead men's bones, and all uncleanness."

"I'll tell you, folks, what my arrant is over here," she said, twisting her head about as uneasily as though she had not become accustomed to wearing such a useful appendage.

"There's nobody in hearin', I s'pose, but you two," and she looked towards the doors.

Mrs. Phillips shook her head negatively.

"Well, it's purty hard gittin' along, this widder's life, and I've 'cluded to forsake it;" and she burst out laughing, showing her decayed spikelets of teeth disgustingly; "and I can't change it, only on conditions, you see, that I bind out my children;"* and here her voice rose higher, and she gesticulated with both hands. "*He* has two children, and he wants to keep them, and I'm willing, for it's easier gittin' along with two than six;" and then she laughed again—the inhuman mother! "I want to git rale good places for 'em. Miss Lee was sayin' as how may be you'd like to have the baby; she's goin' on five years old now, and could pick up chips and do sich leetle chores as that."

"Are you perfectly willing, Mrs. Wells?" said the pastor's

* A common occurrence, and not always among poor widows either. We write it with shame.

wife, eyeing her sharply, while her lip half curled with vexation.

"No, ma'am, I wouldn't do it, only for the sake o' gitten a home; and pr'aps it will be better for them, too, for it's not much I can do for 'em."

"Your oldest children are boys, and I should think, with prudence and industry, with their help, you could easily make a good living, besides the joy of having your dear little ones around you, and with you every night," said mother Phillips.

"He wants me so bad, though," said the woman.

"I will dare to assert it, and the laws of nature will bear me out in it, Mrs. Wells, that he does not love you. If he did, he would delight in making you happy and in doing all he could to promote your happiness," and here she laid her hand on the woman's shoulder. "If you are a true mother you would see the selfish, inhuman monster rotting on a gibbet before you would forsake your God-given children to cleave unto him. He does not even respect you as a woman, and a mother, or he could not make such a heartless request of you. Oh, I almost loathe a woman who can push away her children, as though they were incumbrances, and enter into a second marriage, and give her love and care to one who has no claims upon her, and let her little nestlings cower down in cold corners of the world, and live unloved lives, and serve in bondage of indenture, and be worse off than orphans, because of the haunting memory of being born into the world by one who sold them for the sake of securing her own ease! Oh, there are such women! I will not slur the holy name of mother by saying there are such mothers, for those women never felt the warm pulses thrilled by the joys of maternity, never glorified

God for opening the sweetest fountain in their beings and elevating their souls to the very blessedness of heaven!"

"Don't scold the poor woman, mother," said Mr. Phillips, quietly yawning.

"Finish your sleep, Allen!" said the incensed wife, as her mild blue eyes glittered with anger; and she paced the floor to quell her indignation.

"Circumstances alters cases, you know, Miss Phillips," said the widow, leaning back in her chair, with perfect composure.

"I know if I were a great, stout, flaunting widow like you, with only six children, or ten children, or even *twenty* children, I'd never, never part with one of my precious jewels! I'd wear them all on my bosom, bless them. Never let them leave me in their young, inexperienced years, and go out into the world to be tossed on its cold waves. Tender girls, without a mother's voice, or hand, or heart, or love! Promising boys, led astray, and learned to break the Sabbath, and curse and swear, and never love or fear the God who gave them life! Oh, it is dreadful!" and poor Mrs. Phillips could stand it no longer, but left the room and went to the kitchen, closing the door.

The widow did not stay long, and then Mrs. Phillips went back into the room and sat down near her husband, as though waiting for him to speak first.

"Well, mother," said he.

"Allen, do you think you are a faithful watchman upon the tower? Do you think you do all your duty as a minister of the gospel?" said she, smiling.

"I don't know, mother; but I know that I want to do all that I can for the Lord—all the duties that are mine."

"Do you think you did all your duty to-day?"

"Why yes, I guess so, Mattie," said he, laughing. "You don't think it was incumbent upon me to berate the poor, vain, ignorant widow, do you?" and he drew his arm around her neck and looked up into her face roguishly.

"Now if you thought she was doing her duty to herself and her children, you would be happy and seek the first opportunity to commend her; but when she is in error and wronging her little ones, you keep silent and withhold all counsel and advice. I think you should have talked to her as I did, instead of me; only your thoughts should have been softened a little, not so harshly spoken—the dose should not have been so bitter. You'd ought to have taken my part enough, any how, to show which side you were on, and to convince the shallow-brained creature that the course she is about taking is wrong, not commendable in the sight of God or man, and that her children should be first in her heart."

"Oh, mother, she did look so self-complacent and perfectly happy that I had not the courage to hold the naked truth up before her. I like to see people contented and happy, and in love with themselves," said he, laughing.

"Oh, Allen, I am afraid if your duty looms up high before you, that rather than take hold of it with a determined will, you would shut your eyes and walk around it and pretend not to see it."

"Oh, Mattie, I know I am not firm, and strong, and daring enough, and that many times I shrink from doing what my convictions tell me is right. My spirit is more like a sunny-hearted woman's than yours is. I could sit and read poetry, and gather flowers, and write sonnets, and wander and meditate

in the moon-light, and weep over fictitious tales and broken-hearted and love-lorn damsels, and dream beside purling streams, my 'pensive eyes in fire frenzy rolling,' while you, best and truest of women, are better fitted by far to do my work than I am.

"But, Mattie, you could not have 'patience long drawn out,' like mine is. You could not stand, year after year, pleading with careless sinners to come to Christ. You would weary of argument, and pleas, and entreaties, and beseechings, and of endeavoring to place the all-important theme before them in a better and more convincing light, every time you appeared before them, until at last you would be like an angry shepherd whose flock would not be coaxed, or led, or persuaded. You would feel like driving them by force."

Just then a merry burst of laughter startled the twain from their pleasant communion, and the sweet face of the boy-student, Frank Phillips, was leaning in at the front door.

"Why, father, your arm was around ma's neck, and you were cooing like a brooding dove," and he laughed heartily, while his mother folded him in her arms, and tears of joy bedewed her face.

Then his father embraced him with, "Our baby boy!"

"There was an unexpected connection of trains at Worcester, which helped me home rather earlier than I had anticipated when I sent my letter," he said, apologetically, for he saw his mother did not have on her Sunday cap, with the white satin ribbons, and the black silk apron and cambric handkerchief.

"Have I grown, mother, since you saw me?" he said, stretching himself his very tallest, and his fine eyes sparkling with delight to see his dear parents again.

"Yes, you have changed a good deal. That little flossy mustache has worked wonders in your appearance, Frank," said she, laughing.

"Oh, mother, it didn't come there by chance or accident, you may be sure. I shaved every morning, and although it seemed for a long time to be hoping against hope, the reward came at last. I wanted to look like a fierce Hessian, or a forest bandit, when I came home this time, so you should not recognize me; but it's a slow crop to cultivate, ain't it, father?"

"Oh, Frank, you needn't talk of disguise! If I'd only see your eyes, I would know you were my son. Your eyes are strikingly like your mother's. Hardly as expressive as hers were a couple of hours since," and the old pastor laughed pleasantly, while his wife made an excuse to see how near tea was ready, and went out to the kitchen.

"Has ma been excited again, father, or has she outgrown her burst of enthusiasm?"

Then Mr. Phillips told all the incident over to Frank, who applauded her with laughter that rang even into the kitchen.

Molly hurried and put on a clean apron, and went to see her "baby Frank." She cried right out, when instead of the smooth-faced boy, with the round, rosy cheeks and slips of light hair parted to one side, she saw a tall, graceful, pale young man, with a thin face, and a silky mustache shadowing his finely cut lips; and his brown hair tossed up into rings and curls and pretty disorder, all over his head.

"My little Frank has gone from me forever!" she said as she sat down and cried, feeling too much embarrassed to greet him as usual, with a hearty, noisy kiss.

"No, no, Molly; my heart is just as young and loving and

faithful as ever it was, and it will never change towards you, my good nurse. See, I remembered you," he said, as he took from his pocket a bit of white silk paper, and carefully unrolling it, took out a plain gold ring and fitted it on one of her hard, red fingers.

"Bless you, darling boy!" she said, as she looked on the bright circlet with tearful eyes, and hurried off to show it to mother Phillips.

On the inside was written, "My faithful nurse, Mollie."

"Oh, ain't he so good!" she said to his mother; "that's mor'n father or mother or any my kin ever done for me."

Mrs. Phillips's heart swelled with pride and pleasure, as she heard these honest words of praise.

"Yes, he is a joy and a blessing to the mother that bore him. God heaped great riches upon me, when he gave me my darling boy."

"How is Jennie Howland now? You wrote me that she was insane," said Frank, as they sat at tea.

"She is slowly recovering from a severe fall at this time. The poor girl seems so unfortunate!" said his mother.

"She was one of the sweetest and best little girls I ever knew," said Frank, "and I often wish she was going to school among the Cambridge ladies. They are so vain and light and fashionable! The society there is in sore need of some such ballast as Jennie would make. Oh, mother, there is nothing on earth so very excellent as a good, sensible, truthful, intelligent woman! Sometimes when I have studied all day, and have an hour to spend in the evening, my heart yearns for the companionship of an amiable, intellectual woman. I would not care if she was as old as a sexagenarian, or as homely as

a sphynx, just so I could sit down in her presence and hear her talk, and feel myself drawn into the purer atmosphere that seems to surround such a woman like a halo of light.

"I believe, father, with all due reverence to the calling, that a female such as I speak of, does exert a greater sweep of influence, and wider and better, than a minister of the gospel. I wish you lived in Cambridge, mother," and his eyes sparkled as he looked on her sweet serene countenance; "you could do so much good there."

"Nonsense, Frank," said she, blushing, "every student there who loves his mother would say the same of her, I know."

While they were talking, a neighbor called in, who bore the sorrowful intelligence that claims from a distance had come against Dr. Hammond, which with debts that he owed about Wendall, would more than consume all the property that he owned in the village, and all was to be sold soon by the sheriff.

"Can he not redeem it on time, or make some arrangement with his creditors?" asked Mr. Phillips.

"I saw him not three hours ago," said the man, "and heard him say that he had been anticipating a crash for a year or two, and living in dread of it; and now that the worst is come, he will feel better contented than to live harrassed and troubled all the time, as though he was under a dark cloud through the day, and a burden at night, that he could not enjoy a comfortable, peaceful sleep. All that he is grieving about now is, that he thinks he is not worth near enough to pay all his debts, and he says he has no higher ambition than to live and die an honest man. His wife takes on at a dreadful rate; she says

she cannot live and bear the disgrace and shame of being the wife of a bankrupt."

"If she looks no higher than that, it will be little pity for her," said Frank.

"Such reverses often have a good effect on some people. I knew one family who looked back to a like misfortune, as the greatest blessing that ever came upon them," said Mrs. Phillips.

"He will never come to want while he has good health, and even if he should lose it, he is among friends who love him, and those to whom he has endeared himself by his kindness as a physician."

"I will never see Doctor Hammond want for anything while we have plenty," and the good woman spoke as she felt. "I presume Mabel's husband is wealthy, and will give him a home."

"Some of the debts, the heaviest part of them, I believe, are of Mabel's contracting," said the neighbor, "which makes it doubly obligatory upon her to see that now, in their day of trouble, they have a home and comfort and plenty."

Our sketch is no fiction, and the sequel will truthfully tell how Mabel repaid her poor old father for the toiling years he sacrificed for her pleasure, and to secure her happiness.

CHAPTER XXIII.

I see thee 'mid the Orient's kindling bloom,
With mystic lillies gleaming in thy hand.

SARAH HELEN WHITMAN

A thousand liveried angels lackey her,
Driving far off each thing of sin and guilt;
And, in clear dream and solemn vision,
Tell her of things that no gross ear can hear;
Till oft converse with heavenly habitants
Begins to cast a beam on the outward shape.

MILTON.

A HALF dozen of the school girls had walked up into the deepest and shadiest nook above the old church to spend their noontime.

Alice had promised Grace Lee that she would bring her a new pattern in embroidery and instruct her in the necessary stitches; and she said, "It is just as easy to learn all you girls as one, and those who want to learn must come with us."

"Don't get so engaged in gossiping, girls, that you won't hear the bell when the nooning is over," said the teacher as they left the house.

They had gone but a little distance, when Alice remem-

bered she had left her needle and thimble in her basket, and telling the girls to wait a minute, she ran back to get them.

The door stood open, and no one was in the house but Ernest, and he sat away back on her seat, with his head leaning on the desk. If he did hear her, he supposed it to be some of the smaller girls, and did not look up. She stood by him a moment, then laying her hand on his head, leaned over and whispered "Dear Ernest!"

"Alice, darling angel! is it you? I was dreaming of you, and your sweet face and sweeter voice were with me in my dreams," said he, rising and folding her to his bosom, while he kissed her passionately.

"Oh, Alice! I can hardly bear you out of my sight an hour. I feel jealous of every one who has any more of your attention than I have. How can you be so calm, Allie? I love you madly, passionately, wholly; and though your eyes grow brighter, and your cheek rosy with blushes, you do not feel that ardent love burning in your breast that I do. I wish you did, darling," and he strained her to his bosom.

"Ernest, I cannot bear to hear you talk so. I do love you, but not madly or passionately, as you say. I love you unreservedly, and with a devotion that must be guarded, lest I make an idol to worship, even as the heathens do. Oh! we must not forget to bless God for all this happiness, and to keep our love pure and good and worthy; for God and the angels see us all the time," and she took the needle and thimble, and started.

"Oh, Alice! my saviour, my all! how good you are, and how much I do owe you!" said he, as he held her to his

bosom a moment, then watched her flit out of his sight among the sombre shadows.

The girls all gathered around Alice, up among the cool, mossy rocks, and she told them how the stitches were taken, how many threads to pass over, and all the mysteries, just as Julia had taught her.

"I did want to go and have Julia Clarke teach me embroidery, so bad," said Grace Lee, "but mother said she wasn't a respectable girl, and I shouldn't go in such company. But for my part, I think she is the sweetest and most lady-like girl in Glen Green. That's just the way with mother; she's the strangest woman I ever saw," and the poor girl was proceeding, when Alice whispered something in her ear that made her look down and blush, and keep silent.

After the girls had learned the stitch, and were busy taking turns in making it, Alice stole off alone; for now that a new and charmed life had dawned upon her, she loved to be alone with her own blissful thoughts. She went down into the dell and gathered her hands full of flowers, violets and sweet-williams and lilies and wild pinks, and came back to where the girls were sitting, and began to arrange them into a bouquet.

Ernest Carrol came walking slowly towards them, his hands folded behind him, and his head bent down.

"If you would learn the mysteries of crochet and embroidery, Mr. Carrol, I will be happy to instruct you on fair terms," said Grace, laughing, and making room beside her for him.

He sat down, and casually glanced toward Alice. She was busily engaged, looking over her gathered lilies, one at a time, while a sorrowful expression was on her countenance. Seemingly engaged in deep thought, she laid them down carefully,

and sprang down the rocks and was out of sight a few moments, when she returned with her apron half full of white lilies. No one observed her particularly but Ernest, and he was studying her face thoughtfully.

He saw her examine the bell of each flower, until she had passed over all of them, and laid them beside her in a heap. She looked at them a moment, then leaned her head on her hands and sat silent. When she looked up, the mist of tears was in her eyes, and she bent an earnest gaze upon her teacher, as she attempted to smile, and said:

"Mr. Carrol, did you ever observe that every white lily has a stain in it that looks like the touch of a dirty finger? I never knew it till now. Oh! I am so sorry, too!"

"I never knew it, Alice," said he, rising and sitting down near her, and taking up a handful from the heap.

"Why need you be so sorry, Al? I'm sure it don't harm any person," said Grace Lee, laughing. "For my part, I never liked the pale white lily, half as much as I do these bright, starry, dazzling wild pinks," continued Grace. "Do put some of them in my hair, Alice. How beautiful they are!"

Alice picked a few of the freshest, and began twining them among the flaxen curls, remarking that the contrast was not pretty, that scarlet posies suited jet black hair best, like Mattie Loring's, and that sweet-williams would contrast better; but Grace preferred the crimson, and Alice put them in.

The girls saw the traces of weeping on her face, and some of them thought her very silly to shed tears because the white bell of the lily had grown as though it was sullied by an unclean touch.

"You are right, Alice," said Ernest. "There is a spot in every one of them; but I think all the wild lilies that grow in the Glen are not like these," and he turned a quick, loving look towards her, that she comprehended, while not one of the girls dreamed of the sweet compliment that had fallen from their teacher's lips.

"There is a vein of poesy in Alice's sensitive nature that lies beyond the sight and understanding of we sterner, more practical ones, girls," said he, as he looked upon the drooping flowers that lay beside him. "Mrs. Hemans, I think it was, who sung:

"There are hearts so perilously fashioned,
That for them God's touch, alone, hath gentleness
Enough to waken and not break their thrilling strains."

The girls all sat around their teacher, each one making a wreath to wear that afternoon, of the flowers that Alice had gathered.

"Come, Alice, make yours. It will soon be the hour for recitation," said Ernest, looking at his watch.

Alice leaned over the edge of the rock where she was sitting, and parting away the dry leaves, gathered from among the glossy winter-greens a few of the spray-like little vines that crept, lowly and unseen, close to the ground, and were beautifully dotted over with round, red berries. She fastened these in among her heavy curls, and they swept her cheek and neck, and the bright berries were like crimson spangles, contrasting charmingly with the auburn color of her hair.

"Oh! these do look lovely!" said Ella Carter.

"Wasn't her selection a type or expression of meekness?" whispered Mattie to the teacher.

He bowed his head in affirmation, while his eyes were riveted upon Alice's face with an earnest admiring gaze.

He sighed and rose, and the girls accompanied him to the school. All that afternoon he would steal covert glances at his heart's idol, whenever opportunity offered.

That evening Ernest walked home with Alice. Her parents had been fascinated by his winning address, and frank, cordial manners; and on his promise not to take Alice away from the Glen, they had consented to the nuptials. They knew that she loved him, and that no one less gifted could ever win her for a bride. Cicely thought, though, of Mrs. Phillips's words in meeting, when Ernest presented Mr. Lisle with a recommendation from his own native place, signed by lawyers, doctors, judges, ministers and professors; and the words rang in her ears, and good mother Phillips seemed to stand before her saying:

"No true man will accept of a written recommendation. It is a slur on the nobility of nature, who hath ever written testimonials on the lip and cheek and brow, and in the eyes and mien and voice; and too often does the written one of God belie the falsely penned one of crafty man."

There was nothing in the demeanor of Ernest that betokened aught save an upright, moral, good man. But sometimes his gaze would waver, and he would turn aside from a steady, searching eye, as though he shrank from scrutiny, or feared or dreaded it. And yet, he seemed perfectly good and noble, and one who was guided by correct principles.

That evening, as he sat alone with Alice reading from Shelley's poems, he seemed an archangel. A spiritual beauty lit

up his handsome features, and the musical intonation of his voice was soft and thrilling.

Alice leaned on her hands and wept softly, and those tears were prayers of gratitude and love to the Father who had made her life so beautiful, and bright, and blest.

Her step was still as though she was walking among graves, when she rose and sat down on a low stool at his feet, and bowed her head upon his knee. He observed the silent deed, and his finely attuned sensibilities understood the mute expression.

Her devoted love was nearing idolatrous affection or homage.

We aver, that in the very nature of an exalted love, is a law of gravitation, as it were, which almost unconsciously makes a loving woman sit at the feet of her idol, her beloved.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"How can we ever be the slaves we are,
With a sweet angel sitting in our breasts;
How can we creep so lowly, when our wings
Tremble and plead for freedom."

WHAT sweet, sweet pictures one will see framed in by a window sometimes in the country, sometimes in the populous city!

Such pictures as would make the fortune of an artist beauty-loving, who goes about dreaming and taxing his ideality for images that are beautiful, but cold, and lacking the softness and perfection of nature.

Such a picture was in the bed-room window as Charles Stanton came in from the post-office, one morning, before breakfast.

Little Charlie was nearly two years old, and on this morning he had crept up on the side of his crib and was leaning on the window sill, pressing his cheek against the glass and patting it with his fat hands. His father stopped at the window as he came up to the side door, and calling "Charlie, Charlie!" the little fellow clapped his hands and crowed in his glee, and strove to reach out to clasp around his father's neck.

"Oh, my child, you are an angel," said Charles, stepping back and looking upon him.

Little Charlie's complexion was that clear rose and lily that betokens health. His eyes large, soft and brown like his mother's. His hair clustered in shining curls—a shade too dark for golden—about his white forehead and on his plump neck and shoulders. His mouth small, with the reddest, sweetest lips, while his lashes were long, and heavy, and silken. His night-gown was white as snow, and fine, and fitted loosely as a drapery thrown about his exquisitely moulded limbs.

"Kiss papa," said Mr. Stanton, leaning his cheek against the window.

The babe pressed his sweet, moist mouth against the cold glass, and drew back pettishly, because the kiss gave back no warmth.

Charles took the child and wrapping him in the nurse's shawl went into the parlor, but it was disarranged and dreary, and he went up to Mabel's room and rapped at the door. There was a low response, and he entered.

She had been at a ball the night before, and had not been in bed more than three hours. Her satin slippers were lying under the stand; her beautiful dress flung over a chair, and turned almost wrong side out; her hose, gloves, fan, bouquet and wreath, all in confusion on the table; her handsome skirts in a heap on the floor, and the whole room in the utmost disorder. Her face looked pale, and brown circles were under her eyes, and her long hair, freed from combs, and pins, and ribbons, streamed over the pillow and hung down in wavy ripples to the floor.

And Charles—changes had come over him. He had pined

for the companionship of his babe while it was with the nurse. He was lonely while Mabel was mingling with the gayest and happiest, among those who were no associates for him; and the old temptation, the wine when it is red, the boon companions, the social club, mirth and hilarity abroad, gloom and quiet at home, had induced him to seek those pleasures which destroy. His eye had lost its clearness, his face was bloated, and his form fuller and less graceful. Still his practice was a lucrative one; his talents were of a high order, and his fame as a successful lawyer was still in its zenith. If he wished to be witty, pungent, sarcastic, and ready in appropriate language, he always indulged in a glass, and experienced the desired result.

He had often remonstrated kindly with Mabel on the gay and frivolous life she was leading, but her love of admiration had grown with her years, and it must be ministered to; it was a part of her nature. Charles loved his babe dearly, and could easily have been reclaimed had Mabel with a true wifely devotion nerved herself to the task, and endeavored to make their luxurious home agreeable. It was cold—love to her husband and babe could have brought light, and warmth, and peace therein, but she cared more for reigning the most beautiful, accomplished, and envied woman in society, than in making the "home-hearth lovely but to one on earth."

Charles stood in the bed-room door waiting, with his babe in his arms, for Mabel to speak. She opened her eyes slowly and closed them again, saying, "Take him away, Charles, I want to sleep so bad. Go 'way, Dock, and let poor ma sleep."

Charles turned and went away, then coming back again, he said:

"I forgot, Mabel; here is a letter for you from home," and he laid it on the table. "Why, there's a black seal, surely!" and he took it up and examined it closely. "Yes, it's black, Mabel," and he slipped it into her hand.

She opened her eyes with an effort and closed them again, and slept on with the ominous letter lying on her bosom.

As Charles walked down stairs he hugged the babe closer to his bosom, and the hot tears filled his eyes.

"My darling child, you love me! Oh, what a comfort you will be to poor, lonely pa, when you can talk and walk beside me. God be praised for the gift of my beautiful son!" and he held him off and looked at him, and then convulsively pressed him to his bosom and buried his face in the plump little neck. As though he understood and sympathized with him, the babe's arm clung around his neck, and his soft, loving eyes looked wonderingly up into his tearful face.

The nurse took Charlie to dress him, and Mr. Stanton sat down alone and partook of his morning meal.

About eleven o'clock Mabel came into Mr. Stanton's office, looking sad and dispirited. She was closely veiled, and a thin shawl of black lace was thrown about her shoulders.

"Is there any thing the matter, Mabel?" asked Charles, as he sat out a chair.

She laid the letter in his hand. It bore the intelligence of her mother's death, and that her father was broke up, not worth what would keep him six months, and that his health was very feeble, too.

While he was reading it, Mabel sat leaning her head on her hand.

"Poor father, do you want to go and visit him and bring

him home to live with us, Mabel?" said Charles, with deep emotion.

"I do not know what would be best; we must think about it first," said she.

"Well, whatever is right; do just as you think best," said Charles, and he drew a chair up to the table where she sat and looked thoughtfully into her face.

"I am glad we went to visit them in the spring, and that they got to see our baby; but I wish we could have been there when mother died."

"It was the loss of the property, it seems; and the disgrace and the great change that came over them, that caused her death; she was extremely sensitive," said Mabel. "I knew father had debts standing against him, but I never thought of such disastrous results as bankruptcy and every thing being swept away."

"Well, I couldn't have assisted him much, even if he had applied to me, for we don't any more than live," said Charles; "but if he will accept of it, thank God, we can give him a good home with us the rest of his life. What shall we do, Mabel, write to him, or shall I go for him?"

"Neither, yet; wait till we think about it, and see what is best. But the first thing to be done, is to go into mourning, I suppose," and she looked down solemnly.

"Yes, I presume so," was the reply.

"Have you money you could spare,—say eighty or a hundred dollars?" she asked.

"I have not more than half that much, and I shall need it if we conclude to go for your father, or send for him," said Charles, "and I think you had better get all you need on

credit; but, Mabel, be prudent; we shall not always have as plenty as we now have, and we should economize a little."

"It is well enough to talk about economizing under any other circumstances; but due respect to my mother must be shown, if we are beggared in the time to come," said Mabel, her eyes flashing resentfully; "we can better afford it now, since the fall fashions have not made their appearance yet, and I have not laid in a supply to be wasted or put aside."

Had it not looked niggardly and mean, Charles would have remonstrated with her on this subject, and opposed the great and unnecessary show attendant upon the customary period of mourning, but he knew it would make him seem in her eyes a very tyrant, hard and unfeeling, and he forebore. Charles loved his wife, and her influence led him about just as she willed—not as his better convictions dictated.

Mabel made extensive purchases that afternoon, and when Charles came home in the evening, the family parlor looked more like a fashionable millinery establishment on the day of an opening, than his own neat little home-parlor.

Two dressmakers were busy cutting and fitting two costly dresses, while Mabel was so closely engaged, that she did not observe his entrance until he had sat down in a chair near her. It was quite twilight, and he did not see that a handful of lace and silk trimmings lay in the chair; and was not aware of it until Mabel called out sharply,

"Why, you're on my trimmings, Charles."

He arose and apologized, and sat down on the end of a black velvet-cushioned sofa, and took the last Tribune out of his pocket to read.

"Where is the silk thread, Mrs. Stanton?" said one of the

dressmakers—a neat, good-looking mulatto, whom all of "our set" patronized.

"I do not know, Mary; it was on the stand when I saw it last," said Mabel, looking about for it.

"It is high time the lamp was lighted," said the other milliner, with an air of authority.

"Charles, your paper spread out so by the window, helps to make the room darker," remarked Mabel.

He folded the paper with a quick, vexed manner, and rose to go to the nursery to see his boy, when the missing silk thread was found adhering to his clothes, with three or four yards of delicate silk fringe that strung across the floor after him.

"Jis look at dat!" said the negress, laughing loudly, and showing grinning rows of white teeth; "he's tryin' to steal things, I b'leve!"

"It's no place for men, pokin' roun' in here, anyhow," said the other one, tossing her head conceitedly.

Charles went up stairs amid the suppressed giggle of the two; angry enough to turn them both out of doors. His turbulent feelings were soon turned into laugh and frolic and glee, with his baby, who reached up his pretty white arms as soon as Charles entered.

"Charlie! my life!" said the happy father, catching him up and kissing him joyously.

When tea was announced, he went down with baby on his arm, and took his place at the table.

"Why did you bring him down, Charles?" said his wife.

"Oh, he is old enough to begin to be one of the family—he is not much trouble, and I think you and me and the cook

could take care of him, and dispense with his nurse. I mean to buy him a table-chair, and let him eat with us."

"I cannot do much towards taking care of him, for a few days any how, but I suppose cook would be glad of his company."

"How much longer must these girls play the mistress in our home?" asked Charles.

"Oh, not more than three or four days—we must try and stand it that long," said Mabel, as a coarse shout of laughter from the negress fell upon her ear from the parlor, and made her wince visibly.

"You would rather I would dismiss the nurse, would you, Charles?" said Mabel, as he gave the sleepy baby into the nurse's care, and went on eating his supper.

"Yes, I think it is a needless expense; and now that the child begins to observe and learn, we must commence the great work of teaching him correct ideas, and try and make a good man of him."

"I have no objections, of course, my dear, to give as much of my time as I can spare to the baby; but you know people in our standing always keep a nurse, even if the youngest child is five or eight years old; we must do what is required of us, and live up to the demands of society, if we would maintain the enviable position we now occupy."

"I don't know that it is enviable, Mabel. I don't enjoy life any better than the honest cobbler on the corner, who lives down in the basement, almost shut out from the light of heaven. Just as you please, though; but what determination have you come to respecting your father? Do you design going down to Wendall, or shall I? or what?"

"I have weighed the matter carefully, Charles, and now I wait your sanction to my decision. I will tell you. Father is feeble, and it might be he could not endure the journey. And then he is so attached to the place and the people, and they to him, that it would be wrong to induce him to leave Wendall. He has a character there for being a good, honest, upright man. It would take him a lifetime to make such a character in this place, where he is almost a stranger. I have been thinking he could live at Doctor Harper's. The doctor, and father, and Mrs. Harper always agreed on every subject. We could pay them for boarding, and nursing, and taking care of him, and no person about here would be aware of his peculiar circumstances, and all this. What do you think about it, dear?"

"I want you, Mabel, to do what your conscience tells you is right, and that which will give you perfect peace in all your future years when you look back upon it. But for my own part, I would love to have the society of father, and it would bless me to minister to his last days, and make them all pleasantness. He would so love baby Charlie, that in having his attention drawn out toward him, he would forget all his afflictions. And I believe it would have a good influence on me, too. Many a lonely evening would he beguile by his fund of information and intelligence, and if out of sight of all former associations his mind would gather strength and cheerfulness, and his would be a green old age, and in the end he would be like a sheaf of ripe wheat ready to be gathered into the garner."

"But, Charles, it would have a serious effect on our standing if he were brought here. Other lawyers would make capital

of it, that a poor, old, broken-down bankrupt was living off you, and he my father. Then, you know father has such unpopular ideas respecting society. He thinks one man is as good as another, and would not hesitate to shake hands with your groom or barber, or sit down and converse familiarly with a cooper, or blacksmith, or tinker; and would be forever intruding upon our plans and regulations, and insisting that I should do all my own work, or that Jack, and the cook, and nurse, and the black dress-maker, should eat at table with us. I shouldn't have a bit of pleasure if he were living with us, and you know it would be disgraceful to quarrel or jangle with him. I've weighed the matter well, Charles. There's the Smiths, and the Wiltons, and the Wades, and Appletons, and Everetts, what would they say if they knew that my father had come to this! I never could hold up my head afterwards. All the women in town are envious and jealous of me, that I live in a style becoming a lady, and dress and keep my servants, and every body knows I've got the best and most gifted lawyer in Claremonte for a husband;" and she slid her arm around his neck, and nestled her face close down beside his; while Charles, flattered by the ingenious artfulness, held her to his bosom and kissed her beautiful face, and said:

"It shall be as you say, Mabel. You always seem to have my welfare in view in all you do. I will write to Doctor Harper to-morrow, and also to your father. I will tell the doctor to give him a good home, and he shall be amply rewarded."

"Better say a home for the present time, just as though we meant to come for him, or make a better arrangement," suggested Mabel.

And so the matter was settled.

A letter was sent the next day to Doctor Harper, and one to Mabel's father.

In a week, or less, a reply came back. It was written by the postmaster, who stated that Doctor Hammond had a stroke of paralysis, and had lost the entire use of one-half his body; and that he lay at the village hotel in the care of a careful nurse and a skillful physician, but no hopes were entertained of his recovery. He further stated that he had put Mr. Stanton's letter in the hands of his father-in-law; and that Doctor Harper had moved to his father's in New York, and as soon as he learned his address the letter should be forwarded to him.

"It does seem to me, Mabel," said Charles, "that your poor old father should be with us—we are his children, and God has blest us with plenty, and we could make him so comfortable. He is all alone in the world, save us."

"I know it," said Mabel, her face white and wild with heart pangs and upbraidings of soul; "but oh, it will never, never do! What would people say! How my envious enemies would rejoice and glut themselves on my shame and disgrace! I had rather go and stay awhile with him, and do all I could for his comfort. I could go as well as not, for you know it is not fashionable for people in periods of mourning to go out into gay society. I could stay awhile, and we could pretend that my health was affected with the death of my mother, and I had gone to the White Mountains to recruit my strength. I'll do that, Charlie, if I can get ready to start in three or four weeks. Yes, I'll do that. Oh, my poor father!"

CHAPTER XXV.

"Tread lightly, for 'tis beautiful
That blue-veined eye-lids sleep,
Hiding the eye death left so dull—
It's slumber we will keep."

Though she was kind,
She hurt me, hurt, as if the morning sun
Should smite us on the eye-lids when we sleep,
And wake us up with head-ache.

E. B. BROWNING.

FRANK PHILLIPS had been out hunting with his gun and dog, and had stopped at the spring by the cabin home of Ethel and Julia to get a drink, when he was startled by Julia, whom he had never seen before, flying to the spring with a pitcher in her hand, her face bloodless, her hair unfastened by comb or pin, streaming down her shoulders.

"Oh come, quick! we are alone and she is dying!" were the frantic words that fell upon his ear.

He dropped his gun on the bank, and snatching the pitcher, filled it, and hurried to the house.

Ethel was propped up with pillows in bed, her eyes closed, her hands folded—it seemed her spirit had flown. Frank wet his handkerchief in cold water and rubbed her face, but her

hands would not relax. They were cold and stiff, and the nails were purple with congealed blood.

Julia, weeping and distracted, knelt beside her and held her hands, and implored her to speak. She opened her eyes—the glory of heaven was bursting upon her view. She smiled sweetly as the hue of death stole over her countenance, and left the impress of that new and strange beauty which always rests upon the features of those who die blest.

Then her eyes closed forever! The clogged pulses ceased, and she slept the sleep that knows no waking on earth.

Julia fainted, and for a few moments was forgetful of her deep sorrow.

Frank was frightened, and bathed her face in cold water and laid her upon a sofa, and when she opened her eyes with returning animation he left her, and slipping the pillows from under Ethel, laid her wasted form straight, and spread the sheet up over her face in the same tender, silent way that his mother, or any sensitive woman, would have done.

"We are strangers, Miss Clarke," he said, as he sat down beside the sofa and took Julia's hand in his. "I am Frank Phillips, youngest son of your pastor. I have been absent at college ever since you came here, until three days ago I came home to spend vacation. My mother had informed me in a letter that you sisters lived here. If I have been of any service to you I shall be gratified, and if there is any thing I can do for you in your sorrow I shall do it promptly and willingly. Do you wish me to go for my mother, or shall I not leave you alone?"

Julia looked toward the bed, and saw but the dim outline of Ethel's form under the white covering, and burst into tears.

"Oh, my sister! My poor, poor, Ethel! How can I give her up and never see her any more!" and she wrung her hands and cried aloud.

"You are tired, and need rest. She is among the angels now, and is receiving the reward of her labors. There is no more pain, or sickness, or sorrow in store for poor Ethel. Her journey is over, the goal is reached, the prize is won. Let us profit by her calm, sweet release—the death of the Christian—and let us so live that we, too, may die the death of the righteous."

While he was speaking Alice Lisle came in, smiling, accompanied by her teacher.

She carried in her hand a little white pitcher of cream, and a bunch of bright, fragrant, garden flowers, which she put upon the table. Her hands dropped down beside her, and the smile left her lips bearing with it the ruby tint of health and youthful beauty.

She saw her friend, Frank Phillips, sitting beside Julia with a sad face, while Julia was weeping—her hair disheveled, and her attire flung on in disorder.

Where was Ethel? what did this mean? were the thoughts that flitted through her mind. In an instant all was plain to her. Ethel was dead!—the white sheet gave the outlines of that moveless form.

"She has gone before," said Frank, mournfully, as Alice flung her arms around Julia, and gathering her closely to her bosom wept aloud, saying, "Poor Julia! how I do pity you—death has come to her at last."

Frank and Ernest walked out into the yard, feeling the scene too sacred to be witnessed. Alice came out in a few minutes

and requested Frank to go home and tell mother Phillips to come over, and then go for her mother.

"I will stay here, to-day, Ernest, with Julia; poor girl, her heart is almost broke with grief."

"Couldn't you come to school after your mother and the other women come?" said he, looking pleadingly upon her.

"Oh, I could not study or think of any thing but poor Julia, if I did go to school; and then it would be wrong and selfish to seek my own happiness at the expense of another's."

"Why, I shall be unhappy if you are not there," was the reply, as he looked sternly into her face.

Alice was pained at the selfishness he exhibited, while her grief for Julia was sincerely felt. Ernest walked off slowly, after telling her he would go up to her father's after school, and that she must be at home. She promised, and then went in and began arranging the room, sweeping, dusting and putting things in order.

By the time her mother arrived, everything was neat and clean and cool; and she had just made a cup of tea and a bit of toast for Julia, who had eaten no breakfast. Cicely's sweet words of comfort fell into Julia's heart like balm upon a wound or water upon drooping flowers.

In the afternoon mother Phillips persuaded Julia to lie down awhile and rest or sleep, while they made arrangements for robing Ethel in the fair white dress, which had once been intended for a bridal robe, and had then been laid away for the purpose of a shroud. The collar and pin and gloves had likewise been put away to be worn with the dress. Lest Julia should grieve anew, they coaxed her to lie down while they dressed Ethel.

Mr. Lisle and his hired man dug the grave in the corner of the burying ground, under the willow, the spot she had selected when she felt that she would die and be buried in the Glen.

Mrs. Carter heard of Ethel's death, and taking Ella with her, started to go down to the cabin to stay until the burial. Mrs. Lee was out in her garden, picking currants to make jelly, when they came up, and Mrs. Carter leaned over the palings and asked her if she had heard of the death of Ethel Clarke.

"Laws! no;" was the reply, as she stepped in under the shade of the lilacs out of the sunshine, and wiped her stained fingers on her apron. "When did she die?"

"This morning, about an hour after daybreak," was the reply.

"Was she willing to die?" asked Mrs. Lee.

"Willing and waiting. Oh, she died a Christian—died in triumph!"

"No, I don't think she died in triumph," said Mrs. Lee. "She had nothing to make her triumphant. You know she wasn't a member of the church."

"Not a visible member, in Glen Green, I know, and to the shame of the church be it said; but I am sure she was a child of God. I am as certain of that as I am of my own existence; but will you go down with us, Mrs. Lee?" said Mrs. Carter, turning away.

"Indeed, I don't care if I do walk down with you, if you will wait till I wash and put on a clean dress and cap. I always had a hankering to look at dead folks, and to see how

their faces looked, and if they was nateral and nice-like in their shrouds."

Mrs. Carter was disappointed, for she'd only asked her to go, out of compliment, and to change the subject, never dreaming that she really would go.

"Can't I walk on, mother?" said Ella, with an ill-concealed look of repulse towards Mrs. Lee.

"Yes, Ella; you can go on," said her mother, as she turned in at the gate, and went into the house.

Mrs. Lee was soon ready. She would not wear her best cap, because she said she supposed there would be no person there she would care for. As she opened the drawer to take out her silk handkerchief, she called Mrs. Carter to come to her.

"I just want to show you my treasure," said she, taking out a roll of something wrapped in an old piece of clean calico apron.

She unrolled it on the bed, and another wrapping of a strip of new gingham was around it. She took it off, and a soft fine piece of cambric was then to be laid aside. Inside of that was a newspaper, tied with a white cord. She untied and unrolled it, and the Chinese shawl fringe hung out silkily from the edges of a wrapping of fine, soft paper.

"Just look!" she said, carefully unfolding the rare treasure. "Here on one corner is a little dot of a greasy finger mark. I am that spited I could cry every time I think of it. The first night after it happened I don't believe I slept two hours. I blamed John Mortimer for doing it; but he declares he didn't. Sometimes I think Flora Liodelle must have had it out, showing it to some of the little girls who were visiting

her; but she denies knowing anything about it. Do you know what would take it out, Mrs. Carter?"

"If it was mine, I would spread magnesia on it, and draw it out with a warm smoothing iron, putting a bit of brown paper between it and the iron."

"Well, now, it looks reasonable that I might take it out that way. What is magnesia worth a pound, Mrs. Carter?"

"Oh, you wouldn't need a spoonful for that; and you'd get as much as you need of any druggist for nothing, I expect."

"If I could find out which one of my young'uns did it, I would flog them soundly, I tell you," she said, rolling it up carefully, just as it was done before; and then the women started for Julia's.

"Poor little ones! Mrs. Lee, I don't believe in punishing children for accidents like that. It does no good; it cannot repair the mischief, and only makes your children afraid of you, and makes them dread you and love you less. One should remember when they were children themselves, and make due allowance for the happy, careless, boisterous spirits of their little ones. Every person in the world has to learn wisdom from experience, and it will come soon enough, the dear knows."

"Why, it is right to punish children, Mrs. Carter—as much a duty as it is to give them bread. Solomon was the wisest man, you know, and he in his great wisdom said, 'spare the rod and spoil the child;' and the Bible, time and again, tells us to train up our children right, and not to spoil them by too much indulgence," said Mrs. Lee, glaring her cold

gray eyes into Mrs. Carter's face, with a gaze meant to be cutting.

"I can leave nothing much to my Ella, when I am called away; but I always meant her childhood should be bright with beautiful and pleasant memories to look back upon in mature years," said Mrs. Carter.

"Well, there's a great difference in the nature of children, you know. Now, I often tell Lee I wish it had been my lot to have had one as good a girl as your Ella, or as Alice Lisle. Neither you nor Cicely Lisle know anything about trouble, in bringing up wild, rude romps of careless girls, who don't care any more for your feelings than if you were a hired girl in the kitchen. My girls ain't loving or affectionate at all; they don't seem to care for or love me one bit. Sometimes I get so out of patience I just tell them I wish I'd never been born, and never laid eyes on their saucy faces."

"Well, it does require a vast deal of patience to bring up children, the dear knows—more patience than anything else, a quiet, hopeful, christian frame of mind, not upset by vexations or soured by sickness or trouble, one that meets all life's crosses cheerfully and willingly, and with an earnest faith in God, that in the end all will be well. Mothers have little trials that husbands and fathers never feel or appreciate; and if women meekly accept and faithfully work out their own destinies, they cannot help filling a wider sphere, and being better than men are.

"I think, with a gifted authoress whom I lately read with much profit, that 'the woman who, walking lovingly with God, takes up with sincere heart and willing hand her daily tasks and trials, multiform, trivial, yet absorbing as they are, telling

them off, patiently, faithfully, one by one, as a Catholic his beads—ah! how much better are they to her than prayers; who keeps the even tenor of her way amid crosses and disappointments and slights from those she best loves; who learns to be content with much giving and little receiving; who makes of every temptation conquered, of every stormy passion hushed to rest, a stepping stone to a higher life; who sees in every sundered heart-tie a new anchor to cast 'within the vail,' surely such a woman is purer, better, more exalted, than any man can be in this life."

By this time the women had arrived at the home of Ethel and Julia. Mrs. Lee had never been there, and probably never would have gone, only that she always went to such places to see if the corpse looked "nateral-like."

Alice came quietly and took her bonnet, and drew the large easy chair up to the window for her, where the cool air was wafted in from a bed of flowers that extended the whole length of the house.

Alice was combing and arranging Julia's long, bright hair, while Cicely was making a little pillow ready to put under Ethel's head when she would be laid in the coffin, and mother Phillips was hemming a mourning vail for Julia.

"Is she dressed yet?" said Mrs. Lee, peering over towards the end of the room where the snow-white sheets draped the form of poor Ethel.

"Yes; would you like to look at her?" said Cicely, rising and laying down her work.

Mrs. Lee followed her soft steps, and stooped down to see the closer and plainer.

"What dumbfoolery is this, I wonder?" said she, taking up

rudely between her thumb and finger a fall of rich lace that lay over the arms and down below the hands.

"Poor Ethel!" said Cicely. "This was intended for her wedding dress; but she was disappointed, and laid it away without ever wearing it; kept it on purpose to be buried in. She has on all her bridal apparel, even to the little satin slippers," and Cicely spoke mournfully, as though she had not observed the coarse, brutal expression which had dropped from Mrs. Lee's lips.

"She wa'n't in her right mind, surely, or she never would have wanted to be buried in such an unchristian way as this is," said Mrs. Lee. "I say it's a downright shame to bury anybody in such costly and fashionably made clothes and—why, what's this? Jewelry! as sure as my name is Lee," and she seized hold of the beautiful breastpin, which was made in the form of a cross, entwined about with a cypress vine. "Take it off, and let me have a good look at it—it's so dark back here. Really it looks to me as though it was a cross; but that couldn't be, because she wasn't a Catholic, was she?"

Cicely shook her head, and was letting the sheets down over her softly, when Mrs. Lee asked again to have the pin taken off, that she might look at it.

"It must not be taken off now," said Cicely, in a calm, steady voice, while her cheek grew pale with indignation.

"She looks very nateral," said Mrs. Lee to mother Phillips, while she bent her hard gray eyes upon Julia.

"What was she drest so odd for, Mrs. Phillips?" she continued, in a loud whisper, a moment after.

"I have seen nothing odd or strange about her clothes. It

was the best way to dispose of her bridal wear, and considering all the circumstances, I think it very appropriate and fitting. But if it was you or me, it would be very foolish; as it is, I think it proper and meet that it should be so."

"Was she a Catholic, or did she ever hold that way? I see she has a breastpin on that is in the form of a cross."

"That is no proof of Catholicism. Our Saviour was crucified upon a cross, and this emblem always brings to mind with force his death and resurrection. She may have had to bear a cross in her life, like many poor, broken-hearted sensitive women do. We do not know but she did—we only know she was a meek and lowly Christian, and was an honor to her profession," said Mrs. Phillips.

"She never made a profession, did she?" asked Mrs. Lee; "you know she was never admitted into the church."

"One can make a profession and honor it, and be a child of God; and even if the members of the church refuse to admit them, it makes them none the less Christians; nor does it lessen their responsibilities in the way of example and duty. Still, I believe one's influence is wider and better, and more justly appreciated, when, instead of standing isolated and alone, as it were, outside of the fold, they are within the pale of the church," said mother Phillips.

Julia heard every word that Mrs. Phillips had spoken, and with a gush of tears she knelt down beside her, and laid her head in her lap.

The olden memories these words brought up were intensely painful. She remembered how bravely Ethel bore the disappointment and slight of being refused the hand of fellowship and welcomed into Glen Green Church.

"Oh! my poor, dear Ethel! She bore that privation so meekly and sweetly, and fully believed herself to be unworthy to be one among you!—to even worship in the old church with you, while I knew she was an angel, whom you would have loved and been proud of, had you known her true Christian meekness of spirit, and heard her warm loving prayers for the church!" said Julia, weeping bitterly, and crying, "Oh, it is too late now!"

Mother Phillips held her in her kind arms, and told her Ethel was beyond all sorrow of soul now, and soon soothed her into quietness.

While she was talking, Frank came with the carriage to take his mother home. The good old lady insisted on taking Julia with her to stay all night, but she could not prevail on her to go. They all joined in entreaty, and Cicely persuaded her to go and stay till evening, and Frank would bring her back. She consented to this, and kneeling down beside Ethel, kissed her cold white face, and weeping, while she talked to her as though the words fell upon an attentive ear, telling her where she was going, and that she was coming back in the evening, and they would be together one more night.

Mother Phillips led her away, and Frank lifted her into the carriage, and they drove slowly to his home.

CHAPTER XXVI.

All that gives gloss to sin, all gay,
 Light folly, past with youth away,
 But rooted stood in manhood's hour,
 The weeds of vice without their flower

SCOTT.

Ah! woe is me!

What have I dared? where am I lifted?
 How shall I descend and perish not?

SHELLEY.

And dreams, in their development have breath,
 And tears, and tortures and the touch of joy;
 They leave a weight upon one's waking thoughts,
 They become a portion of ourselves; they speak
 Like sybils of the future.

BYRON.

ALICE's wedding day had been twice appointed and twice deferred by Ernest; and now it was again appointed, and all was bustle in the quiet little home of hers. Julia had been there ever since the burial of Ethel, and her taste was daily called into requisition in making and arranging Alice's bridal attire. It was all to be white—pure white, from the wreath to the delicate slippers.

Ernest was in her society every day or evening. There

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was something in his manners that pained the sensitive feelings of Alice—it seemed that his confidence in her was of a distrustful nature, and the boding fear cast a shadow on her mind, but she strove to forget it, and think the fault was her own. With a true and trusting woman, like her, this was easily accomplished.

"Oh, Alice!" he said one evening, when they were sitting together in the little parlor, "I know you love me, and that I am dearer to you than all the world beside. I have read it in the brightness of your beautiful eyes, and in the hightening glow that would mantle your cheek when you found my gaze fixed upon you, and in a thousand other proofs that you would have guarded had you not been an artless girl as you are; and yet, Alice, you do not love me as I love you."

"Oh, Ernest!" was the reply, "you tell me that so often, and it grieves me more than anything you can say. I will prove, by long years of devotion, of watchful, patient, loving care, by leaving all I best have loved, for your sake, that my affection is rooted in my very life—is the most sensitive part of my being. Already I have given much proof, in giving up father and mother and home, to follow and share your fortunes, whether they be adverse or prosperous. I do this willingly, freely, gladly; I have my reward in being with you and being beloved."

"Alice!" and the enemy of souls prompted him, and for shame he drew her head close to his bosom, that she might not look into his face; "Alice, listen to me: If I should require it as a proof of your love, would you go with me to a beautiful, quiet spot, on the boundless, flower-gemmed prairie?"

or to some pleasant dell among the wild old hills of Pennsylvania? where, apart from the busy world, we would be all in all to each other? Your precious influence would make of me whatever you willed or chose—without you I should be a waif in the world, tossed about like drift-wood on the sea. If you love me wholly, unreservedly, you would do this—would you?"

"Yes, if you thought it best, and that you could do better and be happier than to live in the Glen, I would freely consent," was her reply.

There was no glad, soulful answer, no grateful expression in return. He drew a long breath and was silent for a moment, then he spoke:

"Last evening, when we stood by the gush of water that the old fountain pours into the rock-basin, we clasped our hands together in the flow, and vowed, after the manner of the Scottish lovers, to live for each other. I felt, when I looked upward into the deep blue over my head, that God and the angels witnessed our betrothal, and looked upon us as one in heart, united as sacredly as though the man of God had filled the cold, unmeaning requirements of the law, and pronounced us one.

"Alice, you are mine now, mine as much as you will be after we have plighted faith at the altar, and in the presence of many witnesses. Do you believe me?" and he laid his hand firmly on her shoulder, as if he would dare her to venture a different opinion.

Her head turned uneasily, as though a troubled thought was seething in her poor brain; she held her breath, as if essaying to speak.

He hung upon every motion of hers, and his respiration came and went heavily.

"Do you believe me, Alice?" he repeated.

"I know I am yours in betrothal; but, Ernest, this is a new and beautiful thought; I want to think about it;" and her mind reverted to the marriage in the shade of the pines at the twilight hour, beside the fountain, with no witnesses save God and his escort of angels. Ernest's soft, glowing words, had made of it a glorious picture, and it lay in her impulsive, imaginative, poetical mind, just as he desired it should.

"Did this thought never occur to you before, Alice?" he asked.

"Never," was the reply; and she looked down thoughtfully and drew her brows, and then she closed her eyes as though a new and intensely painful idea filled her mind. He scrutinized her narrowly.

"Do you love me, Alice?" and he looked into her face, while an expression, almost of severity, gleamed coldly from his own.

She started, half in fear, and reaching up her arms, said, "Dear Ernest!" as she softly drew his face down to hers, and kissed his forehead, as we have seen a timid child kiss its mother, whom it feared it had offended.

He rose quickly, as though stung by the sweet expression of her love, and stood before her.

"Alice," said he, and his eyes again gleamed out a cold, hard look upon her, "your love is but mere friendship; true, it is high and holy and elevated, sanctified as is the love of the devout Christian for his God—but I ask no such love as this; my mother and sisters love me thus. I wish the wife of my

bosom to idolize me, to give up everything for my sake; to love me warmly, passionately, wholly, devotedly! I cannot reach or measure your affection, more than I could touch the cold white stars above. My God! what a gulf is between us! I cannot live without her, and yet—and yet—she is far too good for me, too pure to mate with any poor, sin-stained mortal!”

“Oh, Ernest!” she said, rising and laying her hand on his arm, as he walked across the floor, “I cannot see you so unhappy, and know I am the cause of it. You judge me wrong; I do love you with a depth and strength that only years can prove. I could die for you willingly, and—”

“And *live* for me too, darling?” and he stopped and caught her to his bosom, and wiped the raining tears from her cheeks, and laughed with a wild, exultant joy.

“*Die* for me, did you say, loveliest?” and he pushed back her curls and looked into her eyes, and kissed her again and again. “You are only mine, darling! mine! my bride! my wife! at last! at last!”

All the dark hours of a lifetime condensed into one, enwrapped Alice; step by step the wily tempter had led her afar into the darkness, away from the light, until the good angels lost sight of her and veiled their eyes with their wings and gazed into the blackness; but the last gleam of her white robes had disappeared, and they veiled their eyes anew and bowed their heads and wept.

Poor Alice! loved Alice! lost Alice!

The next morning Alice did not appear at the breakfast table. Her father would have gone to her room, if only to have looked upon the face he so loved, but Cicely and Julia laughed and said he was very foolish about her. Noon-time came, and still she had not risen.

Dinner was waiting when Mr. Lisle came in, but he never stopped until he reached Alice's room, and rapped on her door. A burst of tears was the only sound that fell upon his ears. He waited not for the low “come in,” or for the gentle little hand to raise the latch, but he opened it and entered.

Alice was kneeling beside her bed; her hair hung in disorder about her shoulders; her eyes were swollen with weeping, and she looked so unlike the blooming Alice of the day before, that for an instant he stood gazing upon her in astonishment.

“Oh, my father! my dear, dear father! don't touch me!” she cried out, piteously, as she flung herself on the carpet before him, and laid her pale face upon his feet, and moaned as moans the poor wretch who is dying a death of torture and racked with pain.

“Alice, my best beloved, do be calm, and tell your father what is the matter,” said Mr. Lisle, stooping down and gathering up the distressed girl, who still clung to his feet.

“Oh, father, do not take me up! Oh, I feel so bad!” and she turned and gathered tightly around his neck a moment, then she freed herself from his kind arms, and pressing her hands tightly to her temples, she knelt beside her bed and buried her face in the clothes.

“Has Ernest said any thing to hurt your feelings, dear child?” said Mr. Lisle, as he knelt beside her. “If he has I will kill him, so certain as God has nerved this arm with

strength!" and he flung out his arm with a hard, defiant gesture, and his teeth gritted together audibly.

In a moment that frantic girl changed to the softness and gentleness of a dove; and as she laid her little hand on his, she smiled sweetly and said, "Don't wrong *him*, father; not for worlds would he wrong me in thought or deed. Ernest is good and true, and loves me, but—but—I had such a dreadful dream! Oh, father, I can't shake it off—it clings to me like an angry viper," and she shuddered and covered her eyes.

"Father, will you pray for me? may be it will calm me! I feel yet as if I was dreaming, dreaming!"

The good old man complied.

Her troubled spirit seemed to be borne aloft on the strong, trustful words of that deep expression of Christian faith, and she felt calmness stealing soothingly into her troubled soul. He closed by repeating the Lord's Prayer. She joined with him until it came to those words, "lead us not into temptation;" there her voice trembled, and she paused until the "amen," when she spoke it distinctly with her father.

Any one knowing all the truth, would have wondered at the strange firmness that upheld her while she smoothed her hair before the mirror, and bathed her swollen eyes and throbbing temples, and tied on a silk apron over her black dress.

Her father never left the room until she was ready, and then they went down to dinner.

Cicely and Julia knew by her countenance that there was something the matter. Cicely smiled a cheerful "good morning," and Julia kissed the pale, pale face.

Alice turned her cheek to receive the salutation, and taking

Julia's hand pressed it to her lips, meekly and unworthily, as though she dare not kiss her cheek or forehead.

"Why, Allie, you shan't ever wear that black lawn dress again; it makes you look so wan and pale; it always did, too."

Alice made no reply, but her lip quivered as she reached out and took her cup of tea. A vase of white flowers sat before her plate, and instinctively she moved them to the other side of the table.

Cicely observed the movement, and it was, to her intuitive mind, a revelation—told plainer than words could have made it. She shuddered, and the paleness of death overspread her face.

Alice put a glass of water to her voiceless lips, and she soon revived. She frequently had faintness and heart palpitation, so no one observed it more than usual.

Mr. Lisle remarked, that she had kept herself too busily engaged with her sewing, and proposed that in the afternoon they all ride out in the big carriage over to Northfield mountain, and return by way of the Valley road, along the Connecticut river, and up the Deerfield road.

"Oh, delightful! thank you! thank you!" said Julia, clapping her hands. "What a charming ride that will be, all over the cool, shady mountain, and up the valley; and there is no spot in Massachusetts half so delightful as the Deerfield road, with its over-arching roof of ornamental trees. Why don't you clap your hands, Alice?" said the joyous girl.

"There will be plenty of time for all that, when I get there," said Alice, trying to laugh, and hide her weight of trouble.

Just as dinner was over, Frank Phillips came in, with his white hound beside him, and when he learned they were going

on an excursion that afternoon, he said he was sorry he had not known it in time, so he could have rode on horseback beside them.

"If you will go, Frank," said Cicely, "we will be glad of your company, and can very easily make room for you in the carriage. You can sit on the back seat with Alice and Julia, if you will promise to make yourself unusually agreeable."

Frank blushed like a girl, and said he would be delighted to go on any conditions, although he was afraid it was not in his power to make himself agreeable, and he cast a quick, shy glance at Julia.

"Alice, won't you wear your white dress this warm afternoon?" said Cicely, as she took the comb and brush and began arranging Alice's brown curls.

"Please, mother, I'd rather dress just like Julia," she replied, in a low voice, looking at Julia's black dress and mourning collar.

The roomy old carriage was brought out, and the two sorrel horses hitched in, and then, while Julia was drawing on her gloves, and Cicely putting up a basket of pies, and cakes, and apples, Mr. Lisle rolled up the curtains and dusted the cushions, and put in an armful of freshly mown grass for the horses to be tasting of while they would be exploring the winding paths of the mountains.

Alice moved about as if in a dream; but bravely did she seek to hide the great grief that had fallen upon her innocent young heart.

Frank and the two girls sat on the back seat, while Mr. Lisle and Cicely sat before. The road lay past the old church where Ernest was teaching. Before they quite came to it,

Alice drew her thick veil down over her face, when she saw the teacher and some of the girls sitting out under the pines, laughing and talking.

Mr. Lisle pretended not to see Ernest, when he drove past, but reached down and seemed to be fixing something about the carriage.

Frank waved his white hand out behind, and bowed, but Ernest did not see him, so intently was his gaze fixed upon discovering whether the lady on his left side was really Alice, or Frank's mother.

"Was that Mr. Phillips's mother sitting beside him, with a veil over her face?" he asked, turning to Grace Lee, after the carriage had passed.

Grace burst into a hearty laugh, and said she thought it was time he knew Alice Lisle from old mother Phillips.

"How very pale Alice did look!" said Mattie Loring to Ella Carter.

"Oh!" said Ella, "it looked like the face of a dead person, gleaming out through that black veil. Her dress, and bonnet, and veil, were all black, as though she was mourning!" and her lips parted in surprise, as she looked after the carriage.

"She always said she liked to see people dress according to their age and their feelings. I'm sure, then, she'd ought to wear snow-white all the time, and white flowers, too, for she is so good, and beautiful, and pure," continued Mattie, as she slid her arm around Ella's waist and whispered, "I believe I love Alice and you best of any body else in the whole world, and if either of you had trouble, I would feel as bad as if it was all my own."

Ernest heard every word, and he compressed his thin lips

tightly, as he went into the house, and rang the bell for school.

The afternoon was spent pleasantly among the breezy pines, and the gray old rocks of Northfield mountain. There was a swing upon the summit, and the girls were in it a long time.

Frank had not been there for two or three years, and he doubly enjoyed the excursion. Mr. Lisle and Cicely stole away off into a dark dell, and there the poor father told of finding Alice upon her knees in prayer that morning, and of her utter woe, and he asked Cicely to do all she could to comfort the poor child, and to win her confidence, and if it was, as he feared, that Ernest had given her cause for grief, or had shown any disposition to trifle with her holiest affections, his worthless life should be the forfeit.

He said he always felt as if Ernest wasn't hardly good enough for Alice. Cicely promised she would do all she could to make her happy.

In the evening when they returned, they went past Mr. Lee's, and saw Ernest sitting reading aloud, while Grace sat near him, with her embroidery. As soon as they passed, Ernest rose and followed after the carriage.

Cicely and Julia were setting the table. Mr. Lisle was out feeding the stock, and Frank sat in the parlor reading, when Ernest came in.

"Good evening, Mrs. Lisle," said he. "I thought as you passed this evening, Alice was sick, she looked so deathly pale; and I came up to see her."

Cicely looked earnestly in his face, but the truth and beauty of perfect manhood seemed to beam out so frankly, that she could not refrain from extending her hand.

"I have not heard Alice complain any to-day. She is up stairs, not in her own room, I believe. You can go and see her, Ernest."

When Alice had gone up, she had flung off her bonnet, and sunk on her knees beside a lounge. Her tearful face was buried in the cushions, and she did not hear his footsteps ascending the stairs. He stepped lightly, and knelt beside her, before she was aware of his presence.

"Alice, you are too sensitive to live in this world. You have no sins to be forgiven; you stand pure and white in the sight of heaven. I never knew you to do anything wrong—you are an angel, my sweet, sweet girl," and he kissed her tear-stained cheeks, and smoothed back her damp curls.

"Why did you not wear white to-day, Alice, as usual?" and he looked at the folds of her black dress, unrelieved by even a collar or bosom-pin.

She sprang to her feet, as though a pain was rending her heart, and clasping her hands wrung them in anguish as she cried out:

"White robes are not for such as I am. Oh, Ernest, Ernest! it is wrong to gloss sin over with the semblance of purity and innocence. Away with this mockery of white robes and white flowers! they are not for me—never, never! It is a sin against heaven and the angels, and all those who love me truly. Oh, Ernest, leave me forever, let me die now, with this crushing sin lying upon my poor heart, and pressing out of it all desire to live! Oh, am I not dreaming? are you not the blessed angel whom only yesterday I thought worthy the admiration of the world? To-day you distrust me and

make me an object to be hated, loathed even by myself, and spurned by all good and true and pure."

"Alice, you are ill; your brain is wild. I believe you are the noblest and purest woman on the face of the earth. I could not live without you; life would be a long dreary night. Mine own! you do love me, Alice; I know you do," and he drew her face down beside his.

"I must love you now," she said, with bitterness, as she stood straight before him, with a cold, determined look on her face, while her lip quivered tremulously.

"Why must you, dear? because I can't live without you, eh?" said he, playfully, as he took her arm to lead her to the window.

She drew back coldly, and then walked to the window and stood on the opposite side from him.

"How beautifully the stars are coming out in the blue sky! I can just begin to see them showing faintly. One, two, three, four, five—that's all I can see," and he leaned out and looked up.

"I am not worthy to look up towards heaven—to this most beautiful of all God's creations. I feel too mean and abject, and turn away lest the stars look down into my eyes; for it seems they can see into my soul and read all its thoughts and wishes and fears and sorrows," said Alice, sinking upon her knees beside the window, and burying her face in her hands.

"Oh, Alice, don't talk so despondingly! I know I am not worthy the love you give me, not half so good a man as I should be to be your husband. The past cannot be recalled. My heart is stung with remorse, and I could weep tears of

blood to restore to you the happiness you mourn and deplore. All my life, with its best endeavors and best energies, and truth and devotedness, I lay before you. You are my wife now, in the sight of heaven; but if you say so, the laws of our country shall make you mine legally, to-night."

She shook her head, "The lily-white is gone from my soul forever. The mere form of marriage could not restore it or bring back peace again."

"Do you forgive me, Alice, for all the grief I have caused you?"

"Yes; 'forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us,'" said she, sadly, laying her hand in his.

"I had a letter from mother, to-day," said Ernest, "and she is very anxious to see you. She sends her love to you, and cautions me not to let anything separate us, and to let no trivial matter come up between us to cause harsh feelings or coldness, and for me not to deceive you in regard to my circumstances; to guard our love tenderly, that there be no blemish in it to lament over in future years."

"Dear mother! how I shall love her," said Alice, beguiled into quiet. "And yet I never expect to see her. Oh, Ernest, there is woe unutterable in the cup we now hold to our lips; believe me if you can," and the poor girl shivered as though in an ague fit.

"I had such a dream to-day, on Northfield mountain. Father and mother were down in one of those dells that are like dimples in the mountain, and while Frank and Julia were gone over to the spring for a drink, I spread the cushions down on the leaves in a cool, shady place, and fell asleep. I dreamed that it was a dark, moonless night, and we were

walking among old graves, sunken and green and grassy. You led the way, carrying a lantern, and I followed slowly behind you, picking out my way. I thought we came to my mother's grave in that lonely place, and beside it was another, freshly dug and unfilled; and bending over it was my little drooping elm, this same one here by the house, that I planted myself when I was a little girl; and every limb of my dear little elm was brown and dead. While we stood by that grave a sound of wild weeping uprose, and I distinctly recognized the voices of father and mother. They were crying out, 'Our dear Alice! our poor Alice! our lost child!' I thought I took your arm and begged of you to go with me to seek and comfort them; but your face looked so cold and hard and firm, in the wierd, flickering light, I felt afraid of you, and walked on hoping you would follow me; but you stood still by that open grave. And when I got outside of the gate I looked around to coax you to come with me to my poor distressed parents; but you stood there still. The light in your hand was gone out, but there shone a small, steady, lurid flame from out your breast, as though a fire was burning there. You put your hands up over it to hide it, while a hard, enduring look of anguish gleamed coldly from your strange, white face. You looked as though you were suffering the tortures of hell, but bearing it sternly, determinedly, bravely."

"Oh, heavens, Alice! what a horrid dream!" said Ernest, interruptingly, and he unconsciously pressed his hands on his bosom, as though the thought was suffocating him, while his lips parted in ashy paleness, and his breathing came heavily and with difficulty. But Alice went on moodily, as though she was not aware that she was speaking:

"I thought I cried aloud for you to come to me, and held open the churchyard gate, and reached out my arms to you pleadingly and lovingly, and—oh, Ernest, Ernest! you flung your arms above your head, and looked up into the dark midnight sky, and fiercely called on God's name, blasphemously, too, Ernest; and then you shrieked out bitter curses on my name. You cursed me as though I were your enemy and sought to wrong you. Oh, I could hardly bear it! I turned to go inside of the gate to stand by you, when the cries of my parents, lamenting over me as if I were lost or dead, fell upon my ears, and with weeping and anguish I went to search for them.

"Then it seemed to be bright daylight, and I went into a crowd of congregated thousands in my search; some were sitting and some standing, and all eyes were turned upon me in astonishment. No one spoke to me, or offered me a seat, but all stared at me. I looked down in embarrassment, and then I discovered that my feet were bare and white, and so were my neck and shoulders and arms; and my hair hung as it does now, only it was heavy and damp with the night dews. I saw for the first time that I had no clothing on save a snow-white, loose garment that was looped over my shoulders, and hung clear down; and there by my feet, where it swept the ground, was a bright yellow stain, as large as my hand, that kind of stain which all house-wives and washerwomen dread and shun so much, *the rust of iron*. As soon as I saw it and knew what it was, that it was a stain as indelible as white itself, I sat down silently and ashamed, with my head bowed on my knees."

"I hope, Alice, you are not so superstitious as to put any

confidence in the visionary thoughts that flit through your mind in sleep," said Ernest, holding his head proudly, and looking down upon her coldly, while his lip curled in scorn.

"No; I don't believe in dreams, Ernest," said Alice, in a conciliating tone. "Somehow, the dream has cast a shadow over my mind; but it is because it only came to me a few hours ago. How softly and silverly the new moon seems to lie on the bosom of the blue deep, to-night. It seems as if it was only a little distance from us," continued Alice, in an attempt to turn the subject more pleasantly.

"Where is it? I'd not observed it yet," said Ernest, as he leaned out from the window and looked in the west.

"Here, in the south," remarked Alice, pointing to it.

He turned his head and saw it, then bursting into laughter, said:

"I looked at it over my left shoulder; and if I was at all superstitious, I should regard it as an evil omen. I have a whimsical old relative, aunt Sallie Le Fevere, who would draw down her brows, and shake her head portentously, if she were here. I'll warrant she would say our bridal would never, never be, or prophesy some such evil, darling Allie," and he patted her cheek, and rested his little white hand among her brown curls.

"Only three weeks more, and Glen Green won't have any Alice Lisle to be proud of. There won't be a charm left then to lure any more wanderers, eh, Allie?"

Oh, what a look was in that sweet upturned face! She smiled, but it was only a mockery. There was no joy or light or happiness beaming in that sad face. She looked older by years, than she did two days before.

"Oh, Ernest, Ernest! how like idolatry have I loved you! how wholly, how devotedly, and I do trust I have not forgotten the Giver of all these good gifts, who has made my life-path so bright and beautiful and full of flowers."

Ernest was bending over the window-sill, with his pencil in his hand, while Alice was talking.

"Look here, Alice, mine," said he, drawing her down close to the window, and pointing to some pencil writing.

It was twilight, but the writing showed distinctly on the white frame—*Alice Lisle Carrol, Ernest Grove Carrol*, written in his easy flowing style, side by side, with a little vine running around the names.

"Why, the vine you made looks just like a cypress vine, Ernest; don't it?—now see," and she drew down the cypress, with its dainty, sprayey leaves, looking like a clinging mist, as it twined about the window, and swung in the winds on the hempen strings that upheld it.

"It does, too, Alice; I never thought of the cypress, emblem of mourning and sorrow, when I sketched that, for my mind was full of happy and joyous thoughts—strange!" and he bit his lip with vexation.

"If I did not love you, Alice, I would say you are perverse to-night; but I will say, you are gloomy and unhappy, and for fear of contagion, I will go home and call to-morrow evening. You must be cheerful, beloved. You are over-sensitive, and too good to live anywhere but in heaven. All that I can do to make you blest, shall be done cheerfully. I have no doubts of your affection now. You said you could die for me, and I believe you. If I ever caused you sorrow, I ask your forgiveness, and will make any atonement that lies in my power. I

believe I wronged you when distrust came up in my bosom; and for a time I thought your best and holiest and most sacred love was but friendship in its highest and purest form, elevated enough to be cherished in the bosoms of God's attendant angels. Good night, Alice, dear," and he bent over and kissed her cold brow.

Her lips moved to whisper a "good night;" but on her knees by the window she still was kneeling as silent as the dead, or "like life well mocked in marble," until his step died away, when she fell upon the floor, pressing the little hands, knotted with swollen veins, over her mouth, to shut in the gathering groans of anguish that filled her heart to bursting.

How true it is that the "life of woman is all bound up in her affections."

CHAPTER XXVII.

Was it for this
I taught my heart to struggle with its feelings?
Was it for this I bore my wrongs in silence?
When the fond ties of my early love were broken,
Did my weak soul break out in fond complaint?
Did I reproach thee? Did I call thee cruel?
No—I endured it all; and wearied Heaven
To bless the father who destroyed my peace.

HANNAH MORE

The old man lay alone—
No friend had closed his eyelids, and his lips
Were open and ashy pale. His long silvery hair
Lay on his hollow temples thin and wild!
His frame was wasted, and his features wan
And haggard as with want.
A sun-bent eagle stricken
From his high soaring down.

WILLIS

JENNIE HOWLAND—sweet Jennie—whom we have all learned to love as the type of a noble and true womanhood—has recovered, and sits by the open window, with her pale, thin, yet beautiful face, leaning pensively on her hand.

"Oh! I must do something for him," she said, as her fingers

interlocked together, and she leaned back her head and closed her eyes in deep meditation.

"It is the best and surest way to forget one's own sorrows—to sympathize with others, and try to help them. I do feel so indebted to that unfortunate man!"

Alas! for the cruel fate that seems to follow the footsteps of some of us poor mortals, like an angry bloodhound on the trail!

Poor Dr. Hammond had lain ill of paralysis at the Wendall Hotel, until all his means were exhausted, and there was no other alternative than for the town to hire some person to keep him. Some of the most philanthropic citizens talked of taking turns in nursing him; but it was a heavy charge, and some of these good men had sickly or selfish wives, or daughters, who would toss their unfeeling heads in scorn at the idea of their beautiful homes changed into half-hospitals, and of their midnight novel-reading being disturbed by the invalid's groans of distress, or cries of anguish over the greatest sorrow of all—"a thankless child."

The doctor's old friends consulted together—they felt that they wanted to show some respect to him in his helplessness, and yet it could not be done without real sacrifices on their part. If they could have brought about the desirable state of things they wished, without any trouble, and less effort, their poor old friend would have been spared a crushing calamity; but the good people of Wendall and Glen Green were no better than the majority of other good people, abroad, all over the world. So Dr. Hammond, in his old age, and borne down with infirmities, was sold as a pauper to the lowest bidder, at the door of the town house!

Parson Phillips was willing to take him on low terms—just recompense enough to pay a nurse, was all that he required; but a sordid wretch, in whose ears no music sounded sweeter than the jingle and ring of paltry silver and gold, underbid father Phillips, and it was to his noisy, comfortless home the poor old invalid was tenderly carried on a litter.

His friends tried to keep the unwelcome truth from him by all manner of subterfuge, but he was too shrewd to be deceived.

"You will not have to stay here long," remarked Mr. Whitfield, as he composed the shrunken and palsied limbs comfortably, on the bed prepared for him in the new home; for Mabel is coming after you before winter sets in."

"I shall never go there," was the half articulate reply; "Charles's mother is on their hands now, and I shall not live to be an additional burden," and his lips were white and tremulous, and the tears dropped down his cheeks.

It was at this juncture that Jennie sat, pale and thoughtful, by her window, contriving a plan by which the doctor could be made more comfortable and happy.

If she could only obtain her father's consent to her wishes! It was all she thought of at the time, and she resolved to entreat him to listen to her plans.

When he came up from the village in the evening, she met him at the supper table with a cheerful countenance, and with the old child-way that no cruelty could chill or unkindness suppress, she stole slyly up to him and slid her arm around his neck, and touched her face to his as she whispered:

"Oh, father, I have such a great favor to ask of you. I am almost certain you cannot refuse me. You know I am pining

and dying for work—work for body and mind—something to draw out and strengthen these palsied energies, and make me feel that I am of some use in the world, that I am not a drone on this beautiful, busy earth, and an idle pensioner on your bounty.”

“Jane, don’t talk of wanting something to do, when you are nearly surfeited with the best books in the land, and nothing else to do but read and improve your mind.

“You would not win respect by living within the requirements that make a lady; and now I do hope you will try and be an intellectual woman—a bright and a shining light, admired and beloved for your cultivated intellect. You can be a star in the galaxy of great ones, as high as the highest—it remains with you alone; will you, Jane?” and his eyes sparkled with kindled enthusiasm.

“Oh, father, you are good to give me all these grand and rare old books, and new ones, that the poor struggling children of genius are hungering for;—for this I thank you, but oh, I am a lowly vine, creeping about on the ground. I cannot be a lofty oak; you know I am not aspiring. I had rather my father’s hand lay in blessing and affection and approbation upon my brow, than that it gleamed out whitely from beneath the sparkling diadem of royalty. I had rather be a peasant in the green pastures, than a queen on my throne, with a regal sceptre in my hand! I had rather see the tear of gratitude flow down the sun-burnt cheek of the plebian, than to see peers and princes kneel to me in homage, and humbly kiss the hem of my garment. Oh, my father! there is a wide, wide gulf betwixt you and your own poor child! Let us bear patiently with each other, remembering the bond that is between us two.”

“Well, what was it you wanted to ask of me, Jane?” said Mr. Howland, with a sadder look on his face than Jennie had seen for years.

“Why, father,” she said, with an effort, “it don’t seem right to let poor Dr. Hammond suffer and die a pauper—it is wrong in all his friends, that he ever was sold at all; it is a disgrace on the very name of humanity; ain’t it, father?”

“It is something to be regretted; that is true; and it is very unfortunate for him,” was the reply.

“I have been thinking, father, that we ought to take him to keep awhile. You know I could read to him, and give him his victuals; and Mina could tend him; and between us, we wouldn’t leave anything for you to do. He would be no charge to you; and when you came in, lonely or weary, you could sit and talk with him, and it would be pleasant for you and him both, and the best thing in the world for me; for I feel as if I must have something to do, or I cannot live much longer. It is wicked to live so idle as I have to, just as if life was something put upon me, that I must try and tolerate, and worry through with! What do you think about it, father?” said Jennie.

“It would never do, Jane; what strange notions you do have! I work, and manage to keep you living above the necessity of labor; I don’t want to see your hands soiled with work, or your face seamed over with lines of care, and yet all this is thrown away; you do not appreciate my endeavors to make yours a home of luxury and plenty. I believe you would have been in your proper sphere had you been born a ditcher’s daughter, like little Mag Mitchell, who goes around

in the ditches, bare-legged, behind her father, helping him work."

Jennie tried to laugh at the ludicrous picture her father brought up of the little Irish girl, but when she resumed her reasoning, she saw it was of no avail, and that he would be ashamed to have the poor pauper in his house, and would think it an insult to his dignity to minister to the unfortunate man. She said no more, but resolved to go and see the doctor and cheer him in his lonely remnant of life.

Not one of the letters that Jennie had sent to James Hamilton had ever left Wendall postoffice. Her father had told the postmaster that his poor insane child sometimes wrote letters, and sent them to the office, and requested him to lay all such letters by, and he would take them out and destroy them.

The official demurred a little, saying it would be the best plan to humor the young woman, and to write a letter himself to the correspondents she had, and tell them the truth—that he thought it might have a good influence on her mind, if permitted to receive letters written in a cheerful, pleasant style.

But Mr. Howland shook his head, and looked very solemn as he slipped a ten dollar bill into the man's hand, and remarked it would pay him for his trouble, and that he wished he would say nothing about it, for to an entire stranger it would look disgraceful to see him so oppose his daughter.

"May the Lord be with ye," said the postmaster, his feelings touched a little by the long and sorrow-stricken visage

the artful, designing father put on; and warmed a little, perhaps a good deal, by the soothing accompaniment of the ten dollar bill.

Jennie did not know what to do. She thought it probable her father had taken out some of the letters, but it surely must be possible that one out of so many of them had escaped—gone unmolested; and—perhaps James was married by that time; and oh, not for worlds would she let him know of her love if he had forgotten her, or given her up, or married another.

All that night she was restless, and thinking about going to see Doctor Hammond the next day, and wondering what she could carry to him to please him most.

She could not sleep, and rising, she took up a book to read, when the old letter James had written her eight long years before, dropped from its pages. She read it over and over, and wept bitterly, while the recollection of her father's unkindness almost made her hate him. Then her mother seemed to stand before her, with her calm sweet face, saying, "Honor thy father and thy mother!"

"Oh, I must love my poor erring father! I must do my duty towards him," she said, as she knelt in prayer, until her mind grew composed and every thought was in perfect peace with all mankind.

What a wondrous, soothing charm is there in prayer!

"I will make one more effort," said she in the morning when she rose, and had put up a little basket of delicacies, that she thought might tempt the appetite of the poor man. "I will go down past Mrs. Barnes's and ask her to slip a little note for me, inside the next letter she sends her brother James; there will be no harm in that, even if he is wed when he receives it."

And now, while Jennie is slowly walking down to Wendall, with her little basket on her arm, and the tiny note hidden in her bosom, let us leave her and look upon another scene—alas, alas! that it must be!

It is a large, unfinished house—the scaffolding still stands around it—one end is painted white, the yard is full of blocks and bits of timber, and a pile of shingles and a heap of scantling, lay before the front door; under one of the windows the work-bench still stands as the workmen left it, and under the other is an old wagon-box, half full of lime-mortar, that has dried away, with the two hoes that it was stirred with, lying handleless and all buried in it. One beautiful maple tree grows before the door, but several loads of stone have been thrown at the root of it, and have lain there until the nettles and thistles have sprung up greenly among them; nails and spikes are driven into the bole of the tree, and hung full of rakes, hoes, chains, drawing-knives and horse-shoes; all the cradles and scythes owned by the poor rich man, are hung among its branches, until the poor old maple looks like a Christmas-tree that has been garnished at an agricultural warehouse or hardware store. A chain-pump lies near the well, but it has never been put in, because the husband, Mr. Stone, always has so much work to do and so many hired men to oversee. A knotted old bit of clothes-line, with a tin pail and flat-iron tied to it, is lying, bottom upwards, beside the wash basin near the well. A square piece of hard soap lies on the ground beside the basin—the last block the housewife had—

but Mr. Stone is very forgetful, and neglected laying it on the shelf, out of the way of the chickens. Three calves are bawling and waiting for their breakfast of milk gruel, and five large cows huddle together in the yard, swinging their tails and chewing their cuds, and occasionally tossing their heads sideways, when an early-risen fly intrudes upon their drowsy quietude.

The shade of the maple falls within the pig-pen, where a sow, and her family of pretty white pigs, are standing by the dry trough, waiting for their morning meal. The flabby-eared old sow occasionally darts a look of her little, glistening black eyes, through the cracks of the pen, up towards the house, and whenever she sees the thin form of the poor little wife pass the door, with her crying baby on her hip, and a knife or plate or dishcloth, in her right hand, she gives out a squeal that the woman hears and understands, and which makes her hurry her pace.

"Come, old woman, ain't breakfast nearly ready?" says Mr. Stone, rubbing his hands and walking over the floor impatiently.

"Yes, you may set the chairs up, if you please," she says meekly, as she lays the baby down on the floor to cry, and dishes up the breakfast.

"Come, boys," says the farmer, "you know we've a big day's work to do to-day; this is a warm morning and I shouldn't wonder if we'd have rain afore night, and raly that south field of wheat must be hauled in to-day, and as much off the bottom field as is possible, and if the rain keeps off and there is a good moon, we'd better do as we did last night, for

the sake of gitting it in—work till midnight. If we do, you'll treat us to another roast turkey, won't ye, old woman?"

But the "old woman" had carried a heavy pail of sour milk to the waiting sow and pigs, and was busy making some meal gruel for the calves, and skimming and washing her milk pans.

"Who pours out the coffee, old woman?" yelled out the big, blustering Blue-Beard of a husband, rattling his empty cup in the saucer.

She dropped the skimmer, and ran to the house; but Dickey, one of the hired men, a "softly boy," Mr. Stone called him, was standing up, pouring the coffee himself.

"Why, auntie, I can do it. You needn't a-come," he said, smiling and blushing, as he awkwardly held up the huge coffee-pot in both his red, horny hands, very much as one would lift an anvil.

"Thank you, Dickey," she said, and the weary little woman looked as though she would sink down in very weakness.

She had been astir more than two hours. Her babe was thirteen months old, and was cross from teething, and nursed all night except when it was kicking and crying and keeping her awake. The other children, three in number, were none of them large enough to tend baby and keep her quiet; and Mr. Stone had so many men to hire, and so many debts to pay, he did not feel able to keep a hired girl; and so the patient little wife did work enough to keep three women busy all the time. She was looking forward hopefully to the day in which the house would be finished, and everything convenient about it.

Mr. Stone had told her he thought she could afford to do

something to make a living, and to hasten the time in which the house would be completed, and he knew no easier way than for him to bid off that old pauper who was to be sold, and let her take care of him.

She meekly assented; and it was to this dreary, cheerless home that poor Dr. Hammond had been brought. He had been there nine days, and for the last six he had not swallowed a morsel, and drank nothing except a sip or two of water every day. He never spoke except when spoken to, and then if he could, he replied with a nod or a shake of the head.

As soon as the men had eaten their breakfasts, old Blue-Beard called to his wife to know where the big water-jug was. She was dressing her two little girls, and making a catnip poultice to tie on Johnny's jaw. The little fellow had been munching sour apples all the day before, out in the harvest field, and now he was crying bitterly with the toothache. His mother told the little girl to stir the poultice to keep it from burning, while she went to get the water-jug. She got it out from the milk-house, where she had put it to keep good and cool, and set it down by her husband.

"You may fill it, wife, while I fill my tobacco box," said he. And she let the tin pail down, and, drawing fresh water, took the funnel and filled the jug.

She had hardly spread the poultice, ready to put on Johnny's jaw, before "my lord" came in with:

"Old woman, where do you keep the rags? I blistered one of my fingers yesterday, and must have it tied up."

"Just behind the closet door, in the rag-bag," was the an-

swer, as she took up the poultice and tried it on her own cheek, to see if it was cool enough.

She had not pinned it on yet, until she heard a, "Cuss the blamed thing!" from the closet, and looking around, the rag-bag came springing across the floor, assisted by one of Blue-Beard's best kicks.

"When you pretend to drive in a nail, why don't you do it right?" said he, frowning upon her as though she had committed a heinous crime.

"Why, Michael, I had to drive in the nails with a stone. You know one of the hammers is lost, and the other has no handle."

"Well, I'd keep my rags in a barrel then, if I was you," said he, tearing the skirt off an old linen coat that he had found among the rags.

"Is it your back that is sore, father?" said little Lucy, laughing, "I thought it was only your finger."

"You, Lucy!" said the mother, joining in her laughter in spite of her efforts not to. "Here, let me tie up your finger," said the good woman, taking a yard of coat tail out of his hands, and tucking it into the offending receptacle for rags, picked out a soft little piece of white linen. She greased it with clean tallow, and wrapped it around his finger, fastening it with a thread of yarn.

"There's a pretty bad burn, old woman," said he, pointing to a raw, red sore on the back of her hand. "I'd tie it up."

"I couldn't keep a rag on it long at a time," said she, carelessly. "I got it burned taking a rice pudding out of the oven."

"Have you been up to see the old cub this morning?" he growled out.

"No; but I am going up as soon as I can get the children down to breakfast. And indeed if he don't eat this morning he can't live much longer," said the wife, mournfully.

"We didn't make much of a spec, when we took the old fellow to make money out of, did we?"

"Oh, if I could only cheer him up a little, and fix something he could eat, I would be glad, even if I never got a cent of pay for all my trouble."

"Well, if he's sick, he must have medicine; but if he's only sulky, he must have a fill of good, strong victuals, if I have to stuff 'em down him, as I would stuff a turkey for Christmas."

"I won't see him unkindly treated, Michael," said she, and her eyes grew dark and bright. "His stomach won't bear strong food; but if there's anything he can eat or drink, even if we've not got it, he shall have it—poor man!"

"Maybe I'd better go up and talk to him, and see if he wants anything, before I start out to work," said Mr. Stone.

He went up stairs, and the tired wife sat down to the table with her children. She felt faint and bad, and the sight of the half cold victuals sickened her; and she only ate a cup of bread and coffee, and a baked potato. Telling Lucy to pile up the dishes carefully, and watch the baby, and when its piece dropped out of its hand to put it in again, she took the pails and went out to milk.

Mr. Stone went up to the cheerless room in which the poor man lay, and coughing so as to rouse him, he approached the bed; but the sunken eyes slowly opened, and then closed again

Roughly laying his heavy hand on the bony shoulder, he said:

"Ha, old fellow! how are ye this morning?"

The lips opened and moved slightly; but no word came with the effort.

"Say, don't ye feel like eating a bite of bread and meat? I'm thinking that's all ye need. Bread an' meat is all the medicine I ever take."

But the moving lips uttered no sound.

"Don't you want to sit up awhile?" and he slid his strong arm under the pillows, and brought the feeble form up with a sudden jerk that elicited a sharp, singular shriek from the invalid, who made a motion as though he wanted to speak. Blue-Beard bent down his shaggy, sandy head to the poor man's mouth, and heard him whisper the broken words:

"Oh, let me die in peace. There is none to love or care for me now."

"You'll die when your time comes, and not before; so I'll see you don't die of hunger in my house," and with a firm step the farmer went down stairs, and returned with a piece of fat boiled pork on a fork.

"You've got to eat something before I go to work this morning. Folks sha'n't say that I starved ye," and taking out his pocket knife, with which, not twenty minutes before, he had cut up his tobacco, he cut off a thick slice, with the blade all brown and dirty and stinking, and held it up to the pale, closed lips, saying:

"Take it, I say, sir; you sha'n't starve on my hands," and he pressed it up against his mouth; but the face grew paler, and the sunken eyes filled with tears.

"For God's sake—let me—" he gasped. But when the lips parted to breathe out that piteous entreaty, the cruel wretch thrust the sickening morsel into his mouth. There was a quick, convulsive heaving of the chest, and it was thrown out upon the pillow. The hard, dirty hand in anger was waiting, and pushed it back to his mouth, and again it was thrown out, and the thin left hand was feebly raised in voiceless pleading.

"Cuss your old carcass!" said the inhuman monster, as he laid his brawny hand with a tight grasp on the shrunk and palsied right shoulder, and drew the sick man half out of bed, shaking him violently.

He moaned out an unearthly cry, like the shriek of a poor mute; and the children down stairs hearing it, ran for their good mother.

"I'm afraid pap's killing him, mother!" cried out little Lucy, as she sprang upon the fence of the milking yard.

Mrs. Stone heard no more; and leaping the fence like a frightened doe, she left her foaming pails, and ran to the house. As she went in, the baby dropped its piece, and reached up both chubby hands, but in vain; for she did not remember that she had a baby. Her lips were white and her eyes wild and dilated, and her hands half-reached out, as she flew up stairs.

The first sight that met her eyes was the poor old man lying on the floor, the blood and foam issuing from his lips, his gray hair disordered, and his whole frame jerking in spasms. The slice of fat pork lay on the floor covered with blood, and the brutal husband was bending over, cutting another slice with his dirty pocket knife.

"Michael! what have you done?" screamed the wife, holding out her hand as though repulsing his unwelcome presence. "If you injure one gray hair of that poor old man's head, I will leave your home forever, so help me God! Tyrant! what *does* this mean?" and she pointed to the bed, with its pillows and sheets scattered over the floor, and the poor man lying as though thrown there by violence.

She snatched the loathsome stuff out of his hands, and threw it, with the knife and fork, out of the open window, and then, motioning with her hand towards the stairs, she said:

"Go from here! I won't stay where you are!"

She spoke with an air of authority, to which she had heretofore been a stranger; and he, the great, coarse, semi-cannibal, could not but obey the meek, noble, little wife.

She spread up the bed quickly and neatly, and then she lifted tenderly the wasted form and laid it thereon, carefully putting the pillows under his head and shoulders.

She then got a basin of cool water and bathed his face and hands, and put clean linen on him, and combed his hair, all the time crying, and murmuring "My poor old father! Dear me, Mary won't see you abused. God help you—there, there, there;" and she soothed him with her kind, gentle hands, and her soft, loving words.

His eyes seemed set in his head when she came in, and he was cold and stiff; but now he revived—the shock had passed away, and a tenderness beamed in his blue eyes, and a sweet smile radiated and made beautiful his poor, wan face.

"Can I do any thing for you?" she said, bending down close to him.

"God bless you, my good friend, for all you have done for

me," he said, in a low voice, more distinct than she had ever heard him speak before.

"I am going, soon, and then the burden will be off your hands. Tell him, then, that I forgave him. I have nothing to live for now. I want to go. I am sorry I ever troubled you so."

Mrs. Stone cried aloud while he was talking so kindly. It was so new and strange to hear such kind words so kindly spoken!

"Yes, you must forgive him, father. He is a harsh, cold man, sometimes—not always—and he is my husband, the father of my children, and I must walk with him through life; but, sometimes, oh, my fate seems so hard and cheerless; then I know if I am patient and forbearing, and slow to anger, that my reward in the end will be a glorious one."

"Yes, yes, my good child!" said he, faintly, "and remember to always keep the end in view; and now, if you will spread the veil over my face, I will sleep. I have not felt this well for a long time, and last night I could not sleep much for thinking of my situation, and of the changes in my life, and how suddenly I was stricken down like an oak riven by the fierceness of the storm; but it is all right—God does all things well, blessed be His name!" and he closed his eyes peacefully, and she spread her veil over his pale, sad face, and drew the curtains over the windows, and left him to his quiet sleep.

She went down stairs and told the children they must keep very still; and then she finished her milking, and put things in order in the milk-house, washed her dishes, swept, made beds, dressed her children tidy, got some corn and beans ready for dinner, and put on a clean dress and apron. She stole up

the stairs quietly, but the breathing was regular, and he seemed as though resting easily.

She had just sat down to comb her baby's hair, when Jennie Howland came. They had never seen each other before, but Jennie introduced herself, and said she had been ill the summer past, and it was wholly to the care of Doctor Hammond that she owed her life, and she felt it a duty to visit him in his affliction, and minister to him if it was in her power, and at least to show the depth of obligation she felt towards him.

Mrs. Stone was a lady, though the bondage-life she dragged was fast crushing out and blunting her fine sensibilities. It is not strange that her heart leaped up joyfully in recognition, when she met Jennie Howland.

Jennie had a winning way of reaching one's love, and touching on the sweetest chords in our being, and of bringing out in bold relief the best points of character in those with whom she mingled. She took off her bonnet and cape, and conversed sociably with Mrs. Stone, until she was ready to go with her up stairs.

When they went up and walked softly to the bed, Jennie whispered, that his sleep must be very deep and peaceful, for no sound of breathing rose from the sleeper.

She held her head down until her hair lay on the thin vail; no sound was heard, and the gauzy covering moved not with the slightest breath. Mrs. Stone took it up carefully by the ribbon, raising it from his face.

Ah, there was no need of soft treading in the chamber—no need of shutting out the dazzling sun-light by drawn curtains, or of pitying words whispered so stilly!

The robin that alighted on the scaffolding by the open win-

dow, sang a glorious song of intermingled trills and warbles, that fell like rich melody on the ear; but his ear was deaf to the songs of joy and the wails of sorrow—the gay notes of the viol, and the solemn requiem above the dead, were alike to him, for his worn and weary spirit had flown—his darkened pathway had led to the golden gate of the city of God, and the angels had let him in!

Blessed be God for the rest that endureth forever!

Oh, Mabel! Poor, proud, Mabel! There were those to weep in pity over that lone, discarded old father, while you were far away, forgetful of all else save the vain and frivolous life you were leading!

Like Mary and Martha at the tomb of Lazarus, were Mary Stone and Jennie Howland.

The face of the corpse looked as pure and good as the face of a beautiful babe. A smile lingered about the mouth, and his hands were folded on his bosom. He had died as though going to sleep through weariness.

Mr. Stone read in his wife's serene, yet earnest eyes, his duty, and he dared not disobey, but behaved himself as though he had lost a valued friend.

Jennie stayed that day and night, and the next day until the funeral procession left the house. She assisted Mrs. Stone with her work, the same as though she was her hired girl, and in familiar conversation gave Blue-Beard some hints about beautifying his home and making it lovable to his children and convenient for his wife. She recommended Myra Willis as an excellent girl to do house-work, and so great was her influence over him, that he told her if she would send Myra over when she went home, she should work there as long as she wanted

to, because he rather thought they had work enough to keep two women out of idleness.

Parson Phillips preached a funeral sermon at the burial in Glen Green, and the church was crowded to its utmost.

After service in the evening, he wrote a letter to Mabel Stanton, giving her the particulars of her father's death, and not disguising the truth, that he died a pauper upon the charity of the public.

The note Jennie Howland gave Mrs. Barnes to enclose in her next letter to her brother James, was unsealed, and when Jennie was out of sight, Kate and her mother unfolded and read it.

It ran thus:

DEAR MR. HAMILTON:—Soon after you left this place and went to Michigan, you wrote me a long, kind, and important letter. That was eight years ago; and the letter never came into my hands until the past summer. I sincerely regret the unfortunate circumstance. I should have replied immediately on the receipt of it. I write this merely to explain my long silence. I trust *this* may reach you *safely*.

JENNIE HOWLAND

"Oh, mother!" said Kate, "that sweet girl must have an enemy, and who could bear to wrong her?"

"I wonder, Kate, what James did write in the long letter," said her mother.

"Why any person who ever saw the two together, would know they loved each other, and they would know, too, they were meant for each other," said Kate. "You know he is always asking in his letters about Jennie, and how he regretted her insanity."

"She don't seem any more insane to me than you do, Kate. She is pretty, and modest, and intelligent, and how I wish it had been that she was your poor uncle's wife. Poor James! how much trouble he has seen in his life;" and Mrs. Barnes rose sighing, and went to her desk and wrote a short letter in which she enclosed Jennie's, and the next morning's mail bore it from the rock-ribbed hills of Glen Green, to his home among the spacious pineries, that like a heavy broodery of green, beautify the State of Michigan.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

'Tis said that women have been bruised to death,
And yet if once they loved, that love of theirs
Could never be drained out with all their blood;
I've heard such things and pondered. Did I, indeed,
Love once? Or did I only worship?

MRS. BROWNING.

The Infinite that sees us thus
Mould its transcendent form in clay,
Tramples our idol in the dust,
And we afresh must seek and pray.

MRS. HOWE.

Now I see thee as thou art,
Thy naked soul divested of its vail,
Its specious coloring, its dissembled virtues.

HANNAH MORE.

CICELY, and Julia, and Alice, were sitting in the room of the latter, discussing the wedding attire, which lay spread out lightly on the bed.

"Oh, Alice, I can hardly wait till Sunday," said Julia. "I know you will be the sweetest bride that was ever wed in Glen Green church."

"I dreamed last night that my beautiful betrothal ring was dark with rust," said Alice, sadly, looking down upon the sparkling gem that encircled her finger.

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"Don't be superstitious, Alice," said Julia. "You are too sensible a girl to notice such trifles as that, or let them rest in your mind a minute. You are favored above any other girl in the Glen in possessing the love of such a man as Ernest."

"If I was in your place, I'd—I'd"—

"Discard Frank Phillips?" said Alice, laughing.

Julia blushed, and shook her head. While they were talking, a step sounded on the front porch, and Alice knew whose it was, and hurried down. Ernest was waiting with a carriage to take her out riding.

"You seem so low spirited, Alice, I thought a ride out in the wild scenery of the grotto, and the caves, and hemlock falls, would do you good this fine afternoon; will you go, dear?" and his smile was irresistible.

"With pleasure, Ernest; thank you," said Alice, as she retired to dress.

He sat by the window reading when she came down, and announced herself ready.

"Why will you be so perverse, Alice?" he said, half angrily, as he looked up, and flung the paper from him. "You know I can't bear to see you, so young, and beautiful, and blooming, marring your loveliness by that hateful mourning dress, and shading your pearl-white forehead with a black bonnet. You should seek to please me in these little things."

"Ernest," said she, bursting into tears, "I can't bear to wear white any more—it does violence to my sense of right; don't notice how I am dressed—it is a matter of no consequence to any one except myself."

"It is, Alice. When I am absent, and see you in my im-

agination, you are always floating in white robes, and look as pure and ethereal as though you were not of the earth."

"Ah! It is only in the imagination, Ernest; I am not good, not pure," and her lip trembled, and the words sank into a whisper—"not happy!"

The cold, hard expression settled on his face, as he offered her his arm, and assisted her into the carriage.

It was a soft, happy Indian summer afternoon, when the atmosphere was of that misty, mellow tint that so beautifully harmonizes with the fade and fall of the autumn leaves. They were both busy with their own thoughts, and neither spoke until the carriage was in the winding way that led around the mountain.

"Is your wedding dress to be black, too, Alice?" said Ernest, curling his lip.

She looked up into his face, and essayed to smile, but the attempt was in vain, and she turned away and buried her face in her hands.

He did not know what to say, and for a moment he was silent; then he began to hum an opera air, and look around him at the dark hemlocks that grew on the rocks above him, leaning with their gnarled roots clutching tightly over the jagged points, like great jointed fingers, or talons.

"Whoa, Sappho!" said he, as the beast distended her nostrils and snorted at the sound of the falling water, that dashed down and, overleaping a looming and frightful precipice, fell foamily into a stream that lay darkly down under the hanging rocks and vines, among mossy fragments of detached stone.

"How grand! how sublime!" said Alice, for a moment for-

getful of her sorrow, and standing in the spray of the cascade, with her hands unconsciously clasped before her, as in prayer.

The close observer will discover *that every strong tide of rapture that sweeps across a sensitive mind, has a peculiarly touching language or expression of its own.*

We have seen this fact finely illustrated in the character of a dear friend, a poetess, whom we have watched with interest, because we faintly comprehended the sweetly spoken language of her finely attuned spirit.

When she stood in grand view of the Niagara, we watched her parted lips eagerly, waiting to catch the first words—but the tears came trickling down her cheeks from overbrimming eyes, and the brown-lashed lids fell slowly, and she sank upon her knees and bowed her head until her forehead touched the ground. No word welled up from her uncharged soul—but the mute expression was a poem, a glorious psalm of praise that went up to God; eloquently, yet meekly spoken; greater than any *Te Deum* that ever rose from brazen-mouthed bells, and the majestically toned instruments that chant united hallelujahs on the Saviour's natal morn! An expression of her love was to sit at the feet of the beloved—homage to intellect was expressed wholly by a kiss reverently laid upon the forehead—a white lily was given to a child or a maiden—and all her actions seemed the voice of another and a better and holier being than of earthly mould, the voice of another existence, separate from hers, but speaking through her.*

Ernest and Alice climbed the rocks in search of artistic views, and in their delight forgot for a time that a shadow had come over their happiness. When they grew weary they sat

* Mrs. Frances S. Locke, of Indianapolis, Ia.

down on the top of a wall of smooth, solid rock which fell eighty feet perpendicularly.

Away down below them stretched a dark narrow glen, beginning at the foot of the wall, and ending in the stream that washed the mountain's base.

The cool air rose up, fresh and invigorating, from the rocky glen, to where they sat.

"Do you still think our nuptials will never be, Alice, as you prophesied one evening this week, or do you know this will be the last Friday in which I shall ever address you as Miss Alice Lisle?"

"Don't talk about that, Ernest—it makes me feel bad; for I know not why it is that such a presentiment has crept into my mind, and lies there with such weight that I cannot shake it off. Oh, Ernest, Ernest! how dreary life would be, shut out from your presence!" And she rose up and stood on the edge of the precipice, as though tempting the yawning chasm, toying with the destiny that had almost reached the culminating point between blessed happiness and hopeless misery.

Ernest came and stood on the perilous footing beside her—his arm steadied her, though she needed it not, so strong was she in the exuberant joy that thrilled along every nerve, wild in the enthusiastic love of the grand and sublime, and defiant of the danger that lay not a hand's breadth from her firmly poised feet.

"Alice," said he, "I almost feel that we two are as Byron sung, 'portion of that around us.' Before I ever heard of Glen Green, and was a wanderer in Southern climes, I often sought lone, quiet places, and dreamed there and drank in so much of the wild and beautiful of nature, that sometimes I did

seem to feel that I was a part of the surroundings, and imagined the bluffs, and the magnolias, and the water-falls, and the delightful tropical flowers, loved me, and looked upon me as belonging to them. I did not dream with so much reason as you do, Alice. I remember once I stood in a place strangely like this, only, instead of silvery sands and ivy and vines at the base like it is here, rough, jagged rocks lay in confusion, and it looked frightful and gloomy.

"I was in trouble! Life looked cold and dreary, and I was sorry I was ever born! While I stood there, I thought: One little step, and all would be over—peace and rest and forgetfulness; that the world was none the better or wiser for my living; that none were blest because I was born! And a strange fatality took possession of me, almost impelling me to cast myself over the precipice and be dashed to pieces on the frowning rocks below. I believe I should have done it, for all my senses seemed bewildered and the earth rapidly revolving around me! And strange laughter, as of taunting demons, seemed to come out from among the rocks, and was caught up in echoes all about me!

"But, just then, a soft female voice fell upon my ear, carolling that sweet song, 'A life on the ocean wave,' and I stepped back and sat down in a place of safety, and listened to the pretty warbling.

"And so it happened that my life-journey took a pleasant turn from that little incident, and I am very glad now that I did not throw myself over the precipice," and he turned away and led Alice down from the rock to the bank, where they sat down.

"Did you go in search of the sweet voice?" said Alice, interested.

"Yes; I walked up to the top of the hill, and a fair girl, with long shining hair, was sitting on a log sketching the scene before her. I frankly told her, the same as I have told you, how her voice had attracted my attention, and drawn me away from the daring deed of suicide; and how lonely I was among strangers; and all that was in my mind. The Southern ladies are very warm-hearted and frank, and without any apologies she told me I must go to her father's house that evening, and she thought, by to-morrow, a brighter aspect might be cast over my gloomy prospects. The sketch she had taken was true to nature, and exhibited unmistakable genius. There was the spacious plantation and the old home of hers—the village that lay below in the valley, the winding stream, the old mill, the open groves, the white tomb-stones peeping through the green shrubbery, the school house with its play-ground, the beautiful magnolias, the rustic bridge that spanned the stream, and all, truthfully and poetically pictured."

"Did you ever get any better acquainted with her, or what?" said Alice, looking into his face.

"Oh yes," said he, evidently embarrassed; "we went chatting along together, and when we reached her home she introduced me to her parents, telling them all the particulars. They laughed heartily, and her father said, by morning he would see if he couldn't find something to keep me away from gloomy precipices."

"Well, I was hired as instructor to his children, and was a member of the family for more than a year; and Emily was

just like a dear sister to me, and her mother was like my own mother. I spent a year there very happily."

"What ever became of Emily? don't you still correspond with her or with the family? You ought to."

"She is dead now," said Ernest, with an effort to look in Alice's eye; but his gaze was unsteady and wavering, and he looked down and toyed among the brown leaves at his feet.

"Her fate was unfortunate," he added. "When I came away she was betrothed to a professor in a Seminary, where she had been before I went there; he seduced and left her, and, unable to bear the shame, she died."

"She was found dead in her bed one morning, and in a private letter from her mother, to me, she professed the belief that Emily did not die a natural death, although this was kept a secret in the family."

There was a painful pause—Alice was crying, and Ernest was excessively annoyed, but he spoke not a word, until the heaving sobs grew softer, and only a long, tremulous breath told of her agitation.

"Let us go home, Alice," he then said, drawing her arm within his own; and taking her to the carriage, he drove more rapidly down the winding road than was consistent with safety.

"Where's Alice?" said Ernest, bursting into the room the following morning, before any of the family had risen, except Mr. Lisle.

"She is asleep yet, Ernest," said he, in surprise; "is there anything the matter?"

"I have received a telegraphic dispatch from home this morning, demanding my immediate presence. My father lies at the point of death, and must see me before he dies."

"I am very sorry for you, Ernest—I will have Alice down in a minute," said Mr. Lisle, hurrying up stairs.

Alice washed and brushed back her hair, and flung a large shawl on, over her dress, and hurried down to the parlor.

She was pale, and seemed dumb and voiceless, for she neither spoke or wept.

"I came to bid you a little 'good-by,' Allie. If it were possible I would not leave till after Sunday, but the demand is imperious—I must go."

He understood the anxious inquiry on her pale face, and said, "I will be back as soon as I can—in a fortnight at farthest. You must write me every other day, Alice, after you have heard from me once. I will write as often, too; and when I see how matters stand at home, we will appoint another day for the wedding."

"Oh, no, Ernest! it will never, never be!" was the reply that came brokenly, as though she was suffocating.

"Do you distrust me? do you dare think I am deceiving you, Alice?" and he held her off at arms length and frowned upon her darkly.

"No! no! dearest and best beloved! you know I do not distrust you; I believe every word you say; and yet—there is bitterness in the cup we hold to our lips—there will be wailings of grief, and burning tears, and sorrow that cannot be uttered; may God help us, dear Ernest! If we never meet again, hear these, my last words: I bless you as the light of my life—I love and pity and forgive you. Should you never

see me again, and should your life be lonely and unblest, let it be pure and good and upright; so live, as though you felt the eye of God looking into your secret soul, and reading every motive and judging your conduct. Do all the good you can, and may God hasten the time in which you will be restored to me again."

"Dear Alice! I thank you; and now I must go," said Ernest, rising and looking at his watch. "I will write to you Monday, dearest; and now a short good-by; we will not be separated long;" and he kissed her and started.

His hand was upon the door, when a gentle touch upon his arm made him stop.

"Oh, Ernest, I feel as if we were parting forever; perhaps you will be killed and I shall never see you again;" and she clung to him, and hiding her face in his bosom, drew his head down and whispered reluctantly, and so low as to be scarcely heard: "I wish I were your wife before you started away. I feel so unhappy; but you will come soon, very soon, again, won't you, Ernest?"

"Surely, Alice;" and he seemed not to understand her; "but why—why need you be unhappy? you have no cause unless you doubt me;" and holding her hand, he led her to the sofa, and seating her, hurried away.

Alice was in a state of feverish excitement until Monday, when she rallied, and as soon as the mail train went whistling and curving round the hill, she put on her bonnet and went down to the post-office. She was certain of receiving a letter from Ernest; and when the bustling little wife of the post-master announced that there was no letter for her, she could

have fallen on the floor, but she nerved herself, and, making a careless remark about the weather, she started home.

The next day was the same, and the next, and the next; and then she sank under her disappointment, and persisted in the idea that Ernest was sick or dead—and she said if he were only ill, he would surely have a friend write for him.

All through the long and lonesome nights, she walked her room, or sat by the open window; and no words of father, mother, or Julia, could calm her sleepless grief.

Cicely ventured, with all of woman's tenderness, to hint that they might have been deceived in the character of the one they so loved, and that all his winning ways may have been assumed, and that he might not be the honorable and excellent man he appeared.

Alice was walking the floor slowly while her mother was talking; but when the import of the words fell upon her mind, she stamped her foot, pressed her hands tightly on her temples, and with a sharp cry shrieked out:

"Cicely Lisle! You are no mother of mine! How dare you heap such insinuations upon my already overburdened heart! Do you delight in torturing me with your heartless taunts? You might as well say this of my dear father!" and with a groan that seemed wrung from her with intense physical torture, she flung herself upon the bed.

"Oh! Alice—darling! you are dearer to me than my own poor mother—you have been mine from babyhood—and God knows I would not breathe a word to give you pain; but oh, my daughter! I do begin to have my fears and doubts about that man's honesty and truth," said Cicely, leaning over the bed, and laying her hand softly on Alice's brow.

"Don't tell it to me, then, Cicely," said Alice, rudely pushing the loving little hand off from her forehead. "*I* am not one of those suspicious people, who are always on the alert for evil, and so ready to traduce others," and she spoke harshly, and turned away from her mother.

Cicely was prepared for this demonstration of feeling—she did not blame Alice, whom she knew to be loving, and trusting and confiding as the veriest child—and she simply said, "Oh, God! temper the wind to the shorn lamb, and have mercy upon her in the dark hours that must surely come!" and she went down stairs, leaving her alone.

It was almost sunset—and half in anger, and with assumed bravery of heart, as though she would not yield to the sorrow that seemed gathering around her, Alice rose and performed her toilet neatly, and coming down stairs with her gipsy hat hanging on her arm, she asked Julia if she would not enjoy a walk down to the graveyard. She cheerfully assented. They walked down to it, and then Alice said with a laugh, Julia might wait there until she went on to the office after her long-looked-for letter.

Julia sat beside the old stone wall reading Shelley's Poems, when she looked up, and there down the road came Alice with a letter in her hand. She was just opening it, and with a whispered prayer that all might yet be well with Alice, she resumed her reading.

A piercing shriek fell upon Julia's ear, that will never, never leave her while life is her's! Then another, thrilling along every nerve and almost freezing the life-blood in her veins! She dropped her book, and, with one step on the crumbling

stone wall, leaped it with the vigor of buoyant youth, and ran to Alice.

She stood in the road, her hat hanging down her shoulders, her eyes wild and tearless, her lips pallid, and her tightly closed hands upraised, one of them holding an open letter. Julia wound her arms about her neck, and put her face beside Alice's, and said: "Oh, Alice! has the storm broken upon you at last! God strengthen you now, when your little barque is wrecked, and you left so desolate, so lonely, so crushed and broken! Dear Alice!—my heart bleeds for you—lean on me, dear one, and tell me all, and we will go to God together in prayer;" and Julia held the cold white face to her bosom, and smoothed the damp hair soothingly and pityingly.

"I am so chilly, Julia;" and she shuddered, and closed her eyes, while the cool drops of perspiration stood on her forehead. Julia slid her arm about her, and they walked homeward; at every breath Alice moaned out a low, quivering cry, just as harp strings tremble after a rude touch.

Julia knew that all words of consolation were of no avail then—that all she could do acceptably would be, to give her sympathy and kind care. They went up stairs immediately on their return home, and Julia took off Alice's clothes, washed her face and hands and feet, bathed her head, and gave her an anodyne. She still moaned the same low, quivering, tearless expression of her agony, and so exhausted was she from loss of sleep and the terrible shock she had experienced, that the anodyne took the desired effect, and she fell into a heavy sleep.

Cicely knew of the incident, and sat outside of the chamber door, in an adjoining room, lest her presence should disturb

Alice. The letter lay open upon the stand, and Julia took it out to the lamp, and knelt beside Cicely's chair, and they both read it.

Alas! alas! for the power that is given to the unworthy and the unprincipled! Alas! for the despoiling touch of the heartless wretch in whose serpent-trail is utter desolation, blackness, despair, and ruin!

The letter ran thus:

MARSHALL, ILLS., Nov. 17, 18—.

DEAR MISS ALICE:—I have deferred writing to you a few days later than I had promised, on account of my unsettled state of mind.

I have been very unhappy since I parted from you, for the reason, that distrust has sprung up between us, and it seems impossible that our married life should be happy. Surely it can not be, when you doubt my love, and believe I do not mean to fulfill my vows. I will be honorable—my honor stands as the first thing of importance in my principles. If you insist on it, I will return, and we will be wed; but if you do not, it were better for both of us that our vows be obliterated, our engagement broken, and that we stand free as we did the day we first met at the wild-wood grave. You are very dear to me, but our love is not whole and perfect; and this distrust would embitter our lives, and our future would be unhappy. If you address a letter to this place within ten days, it will be forwarded to me.

With esteem, I remain yours,

E. G. C—.

"The heaviest blow has not fallen upon her yet," said Cicely, with anguish depicted upon her countenance.

"Oh, it could not be any greater," said Julia. "God in mercy, shield her!"

"Amen!" said Cicely, bowing her head.

"Do you think her reason will withstand the shock? Was it to this you referred, when you said the heaviest blow had not fallen upon her yet?" said Julia.

Cicely held her white face close beside Julia's, and whispered, "I fear she has been led too far by her idolatrous love, and the result will be more than she can bear."

"Oh, Cicely, my friend! and is this why our poor Alice has been drooping, and why she has wept so much, and laid all her white dresses aside, and has felt so low spirited, and would not be comforted?"

"That is the reason," said Cicely, and they bowed their heads in silence and tears.

"I will stand by Alice as though she were my own dear sister, for I believe her blameless, and in the sight of God and the angels, as innocent of crime as when I first saw her."

"Yes, for a spirit pure as hers
Is always pure, even while it errs;
As sunshine broken in the rill,
Though turned astray, is sunshine still."

"And she is mine," said Cicely; "as much to sustain and pity, as she has been to love and guide. Her dying mother laid her in my arms as a precious gift, and oh, if I have not watched her tenderly enough, may God forgive me, for I, too, was deceived."

That night Cicely very kindly broke the unwelcome intelligence to Mr. Lisle. He was almost insane through grief and anger, and beat his breast, and clenched his hands, and swore vengeance on the destroyer of his peace, and the spoiler of his household idols; but Cicely's quiet words of "William, vengeance is in the hands of one mightier than man. We must forgive, even as we hope to be forgiven. God has been very good to us—He loves us still. Our child is as dear to us now as ever she was, and we must gird ourselves with strength, and renew our faith in God, and be ready to shield and sustain her, and lift her up on our arms in prayer for more love and more care. She is a noble girl, and we must remember that—

'Heaven, when it gives such high-wrought souls as hers,
Still gives as great occasions to exert them.' "

It was a week later. The autumn time was fast fading into winter—the leaves were brown, and dry, and lay in rustling drifts on the frozen earth, and the winds, the ceaseless winds, had hushed their whispers, and taken up their wintry wail. Oh, it was a lonesome, lonesome time.

Alice had recovered from the shock, and, unknown to her parents, had written a letter to the recreant one.

She wrote:

ERNEST, ERNEST, BEST BELOVED:—You say I am still dear to you. Had you not said this, I would have felt that the last link was riven, and that I had no claim upon you.

So long as you love me, I can not give you up. I never distrusted, never doubted you. But if your love grows cold, and you are happy in your absence from me, it is well that our engagement be broken off forever. I leave this with yourself—your happiness is of greater moment than mine, and mine is secured when yours is. I do not want to upbraid you, Ernest, but oh, there is a tinge of bitterness in my heart, and to whom can I show it but you, only loved?

Oh, if you could only restore to me the lily-white of my poor soul! You found a lily on which the rough winds had never blown, and you left it sullied, and its leaves broken and bleeding! You found a pure spring in the wilderness, and you poisoned and embittered its crystal waters forever! You took a trembling and frightened dove to your bosom, and you left it with a broken wing and a wounded side!

Ernest! Ernest! May God forgive you, even as I do!

I am unhappy, but the time is not long in which I must go about weeping and sorrowing! My shame shall not be known beyond the home-hearth—why should it, when there is rest and forgetfulness in the grave? Deal candidly with me, Ernest, as I do with you. This is no time for trifling—every hour is precious, and every day is a long step nearer to the termination of this strange drama.

I will not blame you. If you can be happy without me, if my face is not a light unto you, if my voice is not a joy to you, tell me so, and then go in peace—my blood will not be upon your head, my blessing will go with you to the uttermost ends of the earth. God keep you lovingly!

ALICE Lisle

This was the reply to the heartless letter he had sent her. Untaught in the knowledge gained by intercourse with the world, she saw not that he was fretting under the bond of his unmeaning and worthless vows, and longing to shake them off as though they were galling chains of iron; and that he had written the sentence, "You are very dear to me," merely to gild the truth and shield himself.

The last letter she ever received from him came in five days from the time she mailed hers.

He proposed in elegant and eloquent language that she should come to him immediately; that a pleasant home awaited her; that he loved none other, and that she was his wife as much as though the legal form of the law had been administered; and that to them the law was a mere form, unnecessary, and only worthy the attention of the canting hypocrite and the straight-laced puritan.

She read the letter, and dwelt on its glowing words, and bright pictures, until the poison was instilling itself into every thought in her bosom. She rose and folded her arms tightly across her breast, and her nails pressed into her palms, as she murmured: "It is well enough. I am lost! lost! There is no more gladness for me in all this mockery of life! *They* love me still, but I am not worthy to touch their feet, or to kneel in the same circle around the family altar; to look up to the stars in all their purity, for God is there, and even he has forsaken me, and cast me off from his love and mercy! Ah, I am lost! and there is nothing left me now but to go to him who calls me."

Alice feigned cheerfulness before the family, and that night after they were all asleep, she filled a satchel with clothing,

and selected three or four good books to carry with her, Mrs. Heman's, Mrs. Welby's, and Shelley's poems, and Mrs. Browning's *Aurora Leigh*—this last one, she smiled strangely over, as she remembered the many times she had read it aloud to Ernest.

While packing them, she jarred the book-case, and her mother's little pocket Bible fell from an upper shelf, directly between her hands. She started, with as much surprise as though a coiled serpent had fallen into her hands; then her lip curled scornfully, and flinging up the window, she threw it out into the darkness, whispering, "*Away! I have no God!* In my dark hours, He, too, has left me, like a false worldly friend! away!" and she heard it fall upon a pile of shingles lying out in the wood-yard.

The train was due at two o'clock in the morning; it was only twelve, then, and she lay down to rest an hour before she would start. When the clock struck one, she rose carefully, and taking her shawl and satchel, started down stairs.

Her heart was not softened, as she closed the bed-room door, after taking a last look around her dear little room.

A hard insanity had petrified her heart, and made it a heart of stone. Every gentle, tender emotion was chilled. Her fount of tears was frozen.

Poor, poor Alice! Alas, for the many hearts that bleed like hers! Oh, let us be gentle, and loving, and lavish of kindly words, and smiles, and sympathy; for every day do we pass such broken spirits, on the wayside of the life-path as we journey onward. God, the Father! fold them tenderly, softly, pityingly, in thine arms of love and mercy, for their

wings trail wearily, and their hearts bleed, and their feet are sore and bruised!

As she passed through the room, into which her father's bed-room door opened, she heard a moan as of deep distress—another—then his voice, all broken and pleading, wailed out, "Oh, come back, Alice, my child! my child! come back to your poor father!"

She shrieked out piteously, and flew to the bed, and laid her cold face upon his bosom, crying, "Oh, father, father, what shall I do?"

"My head does pain so, Alice," he replied. "I was dreaming such a frightful dream! Oh, I thought you were going away off to live with Ernest; but—oh, Allie, not as his wife! I did suffer so much in that awful dream."

"It was only a troubled dream, papa. You are burning with fever, and your poor head is so hot;" and she hurried up stairs before he found that she was dressed, and had on a bonnet and cape. It did not take a minute of time to slip off her shoes, fling a shawl about her shoulders, cover the satchel under the bed-clothes, and toss her bonnet to one side.

When she came down, she found Cicely dressed, and a light burning, and her father murmuring broken and unconnected phrases. He could not bear the light of the candle to fall upon his eyes.

"There is every symptom of brain fever," said Cicely, laying her hand on Alice's shoulder, and whispering the words, "He has been restless all night, and I had not closed my eyes until just before you came into the room."

With the first faint streaks of dawn, Alice and Julia walked down to Wendall for the physician. He came, and pronounced

the case a dangerous attack of brain fever, stimulated by intense excitement.

For a time Alice forgot all her own sorrows, in watching and nursing her father. He constantly dwelt upon the one theme, *Alice*. In his wildest delirium, he would one moment be praying to God to tenderly care for his poor lamb, rescued, all torn and bleeding, from the claws of the devouring wolf—then, the next instant, deep, wild curses would fall upon the head of the wretched wanderer, who had laid waste his idols with the ruthless hand of the spoiler.

Cicely, out of love and pity for Alice, would not permit Mrs. Lee, or Mrs. Carter, or even her mother, or the parson, to visit the bedside of her husband. She feared, lest in his delirium, he would say something that would betray the secret they had guarded so well in the family; and it was not until Mr. Lisle could sit up in bed that visitors were permitted to see him.

Thrown back upon her own thoughts, again did Alice begin to grieve over her hapless fate. She thanked God that she had been snatched, as a brand from the burning, from the utter ruin into which she was plunging on that memorable, yet awful night. And yet, to her darkened vision, she had nothing to live for. The great love she so trusted in was stripped of all its wondrous beauty, and truth, and holiness; and when she reflected and looked upon it, its loathsomeness disgusted her; its blackness, and impurity, and selfishness, made her turn away sick at heart, that such great deformity could be so beautifully clothed.

Alas! when we lose faith in the Father, how thick is the gloom that enshrouds us! How we wander and grope, and

miss the still Presence; and how dark and dumb is life without the sweet interpreter, *God's love*, warming and softening and elevating our poor souls!

God be praised for the precious gift of His love; for the approbation we feel beaming down upon us from His countenance, when we live uprightly and unselfishly; and for the trust and faith He woos us to repose in him!

We pass over the agony and fits of frenzied madness that at times overpowered the poor girl, until she lay insensible for a brief season, and at other times the exhaustion that followed violent weeping and raving; the grief caused her father and mother; and the tender support their soothing words brought her, until Christmas eve. All that day she had been silent as if in a dream. Her mind could not be roused from the stupor that oppressed it, although Cicely and Julia tried to cheer and animate her.

That night after the family were asleep, she stole out and walked hurriedly across the fields to where the railroad crossed the adjoining farm, that lay between her father's and Wendall village. There was a little snow on the ground, enough to creak and crisp under her feet, as she walked through the stubble.

She stood on the bluff above the track, and thought how often she had stood there under that old maple, watching the trains sweep past with their trailing plumes of smoke and steam, and at night how like the cavernous, red throat of some mighty myth-monster, gleamed out the glowing coals of fire. But now, that wild, strange pleasure was not the errand that led her to the old maple. She sought to find a quick and

sure death, and she was likely to meet it, in that spot where the grade was tending downwards, and where the curve shut off the view ahead.

She saw the night watch with his lantern, down in the valley beyond. The light was the signal of "all's right," waiting to meet the eye of the watchful engineer. Descending the bluff, she prepared herself for the doom she had chosen, the fate she preferred to a life made drear and void and dark with the shame and scorn that would be heaped upon her, the victim of a wily seducer.

That she might not be discovered upon the track, she wrapped herself in a white crape shawl that had been a part of the wedding apparel, and flung a heavy black veil over her head and shoulders, and lay down with her neck directly across the iron. Just as she did this, the frosty air bore to her waiting ear the shrill, prolonged whistle of the engine, as it neared a station four miles distant.

She closed her eyes, but no prayer moved her lips, no tears trembled under the sweeping lashes, no pity for the immortal germ that slept under her heart, stirred the woman in her nature. She was as cold and hard as the iron that pressed chillingly her fair neck; rebellious as though the great deeps of her spirit had never been broken up—daring as the hardy bandit who recklessly slays his fellow man for gold.

Away in the distance she hears the rushing train, sweeping onward, and its roar is like the dashing of billowy waters and the rush of mighty winds among the mountain pines. It comes nearer—nearer—she can hear the wheels upon the irons—the monster puffs and breathes, and the surrounding hills quake as in fear of his approach.

The innate love of the wild and beautiful and grand and majestic, even then, prompted her to open her eyes and look upon the crushing Juggernaut, whose fiery breath was almost upon her cheek.

She looked—the black wing of death was almost overshadowing her, and it is not strange that her calmness forsook her in that moment; and had she even tried to move, her fainting energies could not have complied; the power was gone. She lay as one struck with palsy, and the instrument of death came nearer—nearer—the yawning mouth was all her eyes saw, and then they closed; and Alice Lisle lay as one bereft of life. She had fainted.

It happened that the engineer had often seen her under the maple, sometimes in the daytime and sometimes at night; and this night something impelled him to look towards the old tree; and as he leaned out, he faintly distinguished an object on the track, and in an instant the signal to the brakesman was heard and acted upon, while the strong arm of the frightened engineer seized the lever, reversed the engine, and poor Alice was saved!

He sprang from the engine before it was still, and lifted the unconscious form; but she could not stand. He carried her up the bank to the old maple, and finding her shawl lying there, he wrapped it about her shoulders, and laid her among the leaves. The conductor came to him, followed by three or four ladies. One of them had a vinaigrette in her pocket, and Alice was soon restored. A gentleman was on board who was going to get off at Wendall, and the conductor spoke to him and requested him to alight there and take charge of Alice. The request was complied with cheerfully, and they

all started back to the cars, except the engineer. He bent over the bewildered girl, and whispered:

"Would you dare to fly in the face of a merciful God, and take your own life? You have much to live for. Be patient and hopeful, and do all the good you can, and wait the Father's time. There is a great work for you to do. God bless and keep you!" and he leaped down the bluff, and sprang to his post in the engine, and the ponderous body moved and creaked, and began to breathe and puff, and move faster and faster, until away off in the valley did the red light behind sway as if borne on a breezy swell of wind, glimmering like a crimson star in the distance, until it grew so far and faint it looked like a fire-fly.

Alice scarcely breathed while she watched it, and then, when it was gone, she sighed and turned to the gentleman who had been left to care for her.

"I lived in this neighborhood years ago. My boyhood was spent among these grand old hills; and now in deep sorrow, I come again to revisit them. My name is Louis Phillips. I am the eldest son of parson Phillips, the pastor of Glen Green church," said the stranger, as he carefully tucked the corners of a shawl about a bundle that he carried in his arms.

"And I am Alice Lisle," said she, looking mournfully up into his face.

"Not the little Allie who used to sit on my knee and take the biggest share of sugar plums out of my pockets, and tease me to tell the story of 'mousie wanting its l-o-n-g tail again?'" said he, starting.

"The very same," said she, reaching out her hand to the hearty grasp of the one extended to meet it.

"Oh, Alice! my little play-mate! oh, that we should meet thus; and yet how much better than if—" he stopped and shuddered.

"My trouble was greater than I could bear," said Alice.

"Oh, no, Alice! you are wronging yourself when you say that. It is low and trivial and cowardly, to shrink away from facing your destiny, even if it be crushing and almost overpowering. Bear it bravely and with a true, trusting heart, and a faith in God that all will be well in the end, and that it is for your own good; and then, and not till then, can you be a true and noble woman.

"I remember you as the pride of all the school teachers and the envy of the mothers, when I left the Glen, ten years ago. Every person prophesied great good, and a strong intellect and wondrous beauty for Alice Lisle then; and now, because of sorrows, sent to expand your mind and test your faith, and increase and strengthen your knowledge, and prepare you for usefulness in a wider sphere, and to quicken your sympathies, and teach you to rely on God, and put all your hope and trust in Him—will you, weak woman, close your eyes, and fold your hands, and lie down and give up your life in your bloom and strength and youth? Will you leave the soldier's ranks, like a recreant deserter, when the battle ground is reached, and the order falls upon your ear? Rise and gird on the armor, and stand firm, resolved to work till you die."

Alice was weeping softly, the first quiet tears she had shed since her great sorrow had come upon her.

"Is your sorrow very deep and trying, Alice?" said he, tenderly, after she had wept for some time.

"Oh, very, very!" she replied, wringing her hands.

"May I kneel with you in prayer?"

"Yes, yes," said the poor girl.

He rose, and carefully laying the sleeping babe out of his arms among the leaves at the foot of the maple, he knelt beside Alice, and prayed feelingly and earnestly, and with tears, for the stricken girl.

Her heart was touched, and she saw in a clearer and different light how she stood toward God and mankind; and when she rose to her feet, her countenance was calm with the glow of peace within, love to God, submission to her fate, and the faith that is as a light to the pathway to the Christian.

Alice requested that the painful events of that night should be kept a secret, and promised henceforth, with the help of God, to bear her affliction bravely, and in the spirit of a meek and patient and faithful Christian.

Louis was a distinguished clergyman and the principal of a flourishing college in one of the southern States. His wife had died, leaving a babe of a few weeks old, and he was bringing it home to leave with his mother.

He came over the next day with his mother and babe to Mr. Lisle's, and spent the afternoon. Alice was cheerful and strong in heart. She had drawn near to God, and was striving in prayer to tear from its throne the false image she had so worshiped.

Oh, you who have loved with all the truth and strength and devotion of the soul; who have invested the beloved one with qualities he never possessed, and charms and virtues to which he was a stranger; you who have poured out the golden wealth of your affections at the feet of one wholly unworthy

and unappreciative; who have bowed, like the heathen, before a dumb idol—only such feel a due degree of sympathy for Alice.

It is well, when the blinding light of conviction bursts upon the sight with its painful glare, if the deceived one can fling open the closed portal of that one secret chamber of the heart, and let the sunshine penetrate, and the healthful air come in cool and invigorating and odorous. And yet in all this busy world, where we walk side by side, and cross each other's paths, and jostle together, how few there are, who hold not, hidden deep and dark in their souls, a desolate chamber in which is silently shrined an urn, filled with memories that are wept over often and often, when none are nigh, and when no eye rests upon them, save a pitying Father's.

Knowing this, let our words be kindly one to another, our clasping of hands affectionately, our kisses reverently, our chidings tenderly, our admonitions lovingly, our forgiveness freely, wholly, warmly, even as God forgives.

It was a pleasant, sunny afternoon, that Christmas day, and Louis longed to visit the old hills again, where he had spent so many happy hours. He persuaded Alice and Julia to go with him in the carriage to the caves. He said they would look dreary enough, in the winter; and yet he would have to return to his charge in a week, and would have no other time to visit them.

They went, although Alice shuddered at the thought of ever going there again. The memory of her past dreams would come so harshly and sharply back upon her mind; and yet she was like the poor Catholic who loves to "pain and mortify the flesh for the good of the soul." She did not feel

able to ramble around and visit all the favorite places that Louis wished to see; and while Julia went with him, she sat on the top of the ledge, where she had last sat beside Ernest. Her grief was deep, too deep for tears, as she sat there alone, thinking of all that had passed while they were there, and of the story he had told her about the beautiful southern girl, whose destiny was ill-starred, like her own. She almost seemed to see Ernest, as he had stood there, tall and straight and beautiful, and seemed to hear his sweet soft tones, as he plaintively dwelt upon the fate of Emily. It was there he had sat, leaning against the same mossy rock, and she looked around, almost feeling his presence. On the ground, half covered by brown leaves, she saw a black morocco pocket-book, lying just where Ernest had leaned against the rock.

She remembered seeing such a one sticking out of his pocket. On taking it up, she found it full of papers and letters, all damp, but not mouldy, though they were flecked with spots of mildew, not enough to injure the writing. She wrapped it in her handkerchief, and as soon as they returned home, she hurried to her room and emptied it of its contents, opening each paper, and spreading it out on the table to dry. In one part of it were eight or ten bank bills, apparently counterfeit, all of them lacking the signature of the cashier. They were bright and new, save that the damp had stuck them together. On one of the papers was a complete alphabet in hieroglyphics, with the explanatory letters corresponding.

When she saw this, her breath stopped suddenly; a pang as of death shot through her heart. She sank in a chair, crying, "*My Ernest?* Oh, God of love and mercy! I thank thee that thou didst snatch me as a brand from the burning!"

Then she opened a large folded sheet of satiny paper, and found the very recommendation he had shown her father, when he first paid his addresses to her. Inside of it was a note, containing these words:

DEAR CUB:—How 'll this suit? We've had a deal of trouble getting you up one of the right sort.

Humphreyville swears this recommend would take with the angel Gabriel. I think we deserve praise. Write soon, Phil.

Wishing you success, yours,

G. W. WILLMOT, Sec'y of M. Ms.

Another note inside of an envelope contained these words:

Trouble ahead—Montelth's been blabbing—will have his trial next meeting, if he can be spared. Jones thinks every member will have to be present; if we can't manage, you 'll be sent for—will telegraph that your father is dying—understand.

How are ye progressing in love matters? Camden's got his flower transplanted.

M. Ms.

There was not a letter from mother, or sister, or any relative, in the pocket-book. A long letter, in characters, was found among them; this, she could not read, but the postscript, written hurriedly, and awhile after the rest, read thus:

"Let Howland read this, and tell us what he thinks of the proposition."

But oh, what was her grief on finding a letter superscribed to Philip Winters, in a delicate feminine hand, that read as follows:

PHILIP WINTERS:—I could curse you. I could rejoice in seeing you die a death of intense torture, only, that my poor lost Emily loved you, and died with your name upon her white, white lips, and held my hand while dying, and made me promise to forgive, and never seek to injure you.

Only this saves you, accursed of all mankind! You came poor, and lonely, and friendless, to our home—we took you in, and employed, and honored, and loved you; and this is our reward, poisonous viper that you are!

After Emma was dead, a vial of laudanum was found under her pillow, with your daguerreotype, and a note telling why she died. Wretch that you are! You have broke my heart—but go! for her sweet sake I will let you live, hoping her sweet innocent face may haunt your midnight pillow, and that remorse may torture your worthless life, until you suffer, even as I suffer now, only without hope. Farewell!

EMILY LANE WOODWORTH.

Another letter, signed by a deacon of a Presbyterian church, in Connecticut, stated, that the members had met and talked the matter over, and had concluded to hire him; although some of them demurred at the salary, they were all willing, and judged, from the two sermons they had heard him preach, that they would like him.

This letter was addressed to Philip Winters, and dated a year back, and sent from Maine.

Alice gathered the papers all up when they were dry, and restored them to the pocket book, and locked them in a private drawer. This event crowned her woe. It was the last stroke, and it let a flood of light into her clouded mind, and strength came of that light, and she stood up, her hands clasped in a prayer of gratitude to the good God who had so tenderly guarded her. The vacillating weakness of immature womanhood was gone—she was a girl no longer, but a brave, strong, resigned, self-reliant woman.

She felt then, that God loved her, and gave her his approbation, that she was an object of his special care; else, why had he saved her twice—once from impending and instant death, and once from a fate worse than death?

She resolved to be cheerful and happy in token of her gratitude, and to live for the life inlinked with her own; and live as though she profited by the hard experience which would lay like a blight upon her life all through time.

She had made a great mistake, and one which could not be wholly rectified. She blamed herself, and did not seek to hide under those excuses that sickly sentimentalists use so freely as a screen; but looking the past full in the face, she bowed her head, and covered her eyes, and mourned over the perfect trust that was broken, the confidence lost, the empty vows she had garnered like precious treasures, which were now, like flowers, withered, and scentless, and faded. But mourned she bitterest over the whiteness gone from her soul forever!

And yet there was a work for her to do. A soul was waiting, snow-white, to receive the impressions that were to bring weal or woe, for life and for eternity. Like a book, fair-leaved and unwritten, were its pure pages—and the mighty pen was in her hand, and the thoughts in her brain. This was her work, and for this she nerved herself, and drew nearer to God and the pitying angels, and her upturned pleading face was not turned away unsatisfied.

Prayer lifted her into a purer atmosphere, banished every feeling of resentment. Her love to all mankind came back again, and, save in the eyes of a world ever ready to sit in judgment upon the errors and temptations of others, Alice Lisle was richer in the wealth that beautifies and adorns the spirit, and fits it for the kingdom where the "wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest."

But yonder, like a green shore, appears our limits in view, and we must leave Alice in the tender arms of the good Shepherd, who careth for His lambs. All will be well, for she has returned to the rest from which she had been lured by the dazzling light of a love as fickle and unstable as the dancing gleam of the will-o'-the-wisp.

"Look at her
Who reads aright the image on her soul,
And gives it nurture like a child of light;
Her life is calm and blessed, for her peace,
Like a rich pearl beyond the diver's ken,
Lies deep in her own bosom."

CHAPTER XXIX.

Heaven is my witness how I loved the maid!
Oh, she was dearer to my soul than light!
Dear as the vital stream that feeds my heart!
But know, my *honor's* dearer than my love.

HANNAH MORE.

A HUMBLE cottage home is embowered in the spacious pine woods of Michigan.

It is lowly, yet beautiful and comfortable, and it seems the taste of a poet has run riot in adorning that quiet retreat.

The Michigan rose climbs, and spreads, and clusters, and swings in wild luxuriance all over the cottage, rendering the abode a very bower. But now it is autumn, and

"The warm sun is falling, the bleak wind is wailing,
The bare boughs are sighing, the pale flowers are dying,
And the year
On the earth, her death-bed, in a shower of leaves dead,
Is lying."

Within the cottage parlor a marriage ceremony is being performed.

A gentle, timid maiden, with a sweet face, full of joyful love and trust, lays her little hand within the manly grasp of *his*, hard, and horny, and toil-worn. The old pastor solemnly

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speaks the words that unite the twain in one, for life—the mother walks softly forward, and lays her hands upon their heads in blessing—the child-sister Rosa, smiles as she congratulates her brother and his bride—and the kindred draw near with claspings of hands and well wishes, and James Hamilton and his wife look upon life with visions undimmed, and full of promise, and full of joy.

A neighbor rides up to the gate with a hallo, and one goes out and receives the package of news from the post-office.

There is the *Herald*, and *Watchman*, and *Christian Observer*, and two letters, one from Kate Barnes to her grandma Hamilton and aunt Rosa. The other is from Mrs. Barnes to her brother James, the very one that contained the letter sent by Jennie Howland.

"I am glad they have written at last," said grandma, "for it's nigh on to two months since we've heard from them. Read ours right out, Rosa, dear; we all want to hear the news."

While James was opening his letter, Rosa read aloud the one in her hand. He glanced at the note, first, and saw Jennie's name signed to it. He hardly drew a breath, while, with blanched cheek, his eye ran over the brief contents.

Oh, it would have been such a relief to him, had he been alone, where he could have soothed his bursting heart with a groan! But he slowly folded it, and twirled it carelessly in his fingers, and leaned over on his wife's chair, as though intently listening to Rosa.

He could hardly see, and a stunning noise seemed roaring about him, like ocean billows in a tempest, and the room seemed revolving around him; but he nerved himself, and bore the shock bravely. Rosa read about Doctor Hammond's death,

and how it was brought about. This gave additional pain to James, and had he exhibited perturbation, it would have been charged to this circumstance.

"Oh, of all sad words of tongue or pen,
The saddest are these: *it might have been.*"

It was unmanly, unholy to grieve, or lament, or wish otherwise; and James was a man whose principles, compared with other men's, were as gold, seven times refined, compared with alloyed silver, or rusty coppers.

It has been said that "pity is akin to love." All our loves of earth have been preceded by Pity, who, like an angel, benign of countenance, and meek-eyed, and white-robed, has walked before, and led us, though we were unconscious, and felt no gentle fingers enclasping our hands, and no mild eyes looking into ours and winning us forward by a sweet fascination.

Yet it is so, and the old assertion, that is flouted by the proud, and gifted, and philosophic, lies softly and unquestioned down in our heart, and we look upon it as unsmilingly and reverently, as we look upon the brown tress—all that remains to us of a dear mother gone before.

Jessie Sherman was an orphan cousin of James Hamilton's. She had no home, and came from Pennsylvania to live with her old aunt. She had never met any of the family before, and did not seem to James like a relation. She was a pure-minded, good girl; too gentle for earth, and thrown in the constant society of a noble-hearted man like James, she learned to love him, and yet she knew it not; knew not why she started at his foot-fall, and blushed, and trembled when he

came in; knew not that she loved him more than a friend or cousin, until he was making preparation to pay a long visit to Wendall, and would be absent for months—then she felt how necessary was his presence, his voice, his smile, to her existence.

James found her in tears, and shrewdly guessed why she wept. She was too artless to hide it from him, and when pressed for a reason, she cried anew, and said she would be so very, very lonesome while he was gone.

He was touched—he could not harm a worm without pain, much less his little cousin Jessie. He was afraid to seek to loosen her affections from him—he took all blame upon himself—pity is akin to love, and—he took her hand, with a great, suffocating, oppressive heart-pain, and whispered, "I will never leave you, Jessie, if you will give me the right to call you mine—my wife!"

And he laid down the old and only love—the love he had nursed for eight long, toil-burdened years, and took up the beautiful semblance of a new one, as many noble, self-sacrificing men have done before and since, and will do so long as the true nobility of manhood exists in great and tender souls.

If we could read hearts as we can read books, or even, blindly as we can see to read faces, we would start in utter amazement at seeing so many marriages under like circumstances with this one.

We venture to assert, that one out of every seven, all over the world, are similar to this.

Oh, what a pity! what a sore pity! It is all so easily done, so smoothly do the unwary feet fall into the snare that themselves have laid.

The lady may be looking uncommonly pretty—or the moonlight may be falling so softly and dreamily upon the June-gemmed earth; or the poetry she is reading may be warm and impassioned—contagion is caught—he grows sentimental, and whispers a sentence dipt in the ardent glow of feeling. He has *committed himself*, and there is no honorable release, save to follow up the old and beaten trail, and *save his honor*, and her from weeping over vows too hastily spoken.

Oh, what a pity, and what a great sacrifice! and thousands of such martyrs there are in the world, whose lips are sealed ever, and whose secret lies urned in their hearts, and goes with them to the grave unconfessed!

CHAPTER XXX.

Let me assert eternal Providence,
And justify the ways of God to man.
PARADISE LOST.

MABEL STANTON covered up her face in the bed-clothes and shrieked aloud when the midwife announced that her newborn babe was a daughter—a wee-faced, dainty little dear—but that its back was strangely deformed and crooked, with a lump on one shoulder, and both its tender little feet turned directly in.

“Oh, that I should live to see this!” she cried. “Tell Charles to come here!”

Charles came, with a flush on his face like anger, and a sharp, penetrating look in his eyes, that cut like a knife to her heart.

“Have you seen it, Charlie?” she said, with dilated eyes and broken voice.

“Yes,” said he, gazing steadily at her.

“What will be done?” she asked, in evident distress.

“You had better say, ‘what have I done!’” he answered, without taking his eyes off her face.

“Oh, if it had only been a boy!” she moaned.

"No, Mabel; our daughter, if homely and deformed, will probably be a far better and wiser woman, and more intelligent, than though she were a mere butterfly of fashion—good for nothing, and of no use to herself or any body else."

"I wish you would be quiet, Charles, and let me sleep. I feel as if I could not survive this terrible calamity! Oh, what have I done that I should merit this sore affliction," groaned Mabel.

Charles looked as though he only lacked the courage to tell her of the misdeeds of the past; but he bit his lips and walked the room hurriedly a few moments, then went out.

In a little time the midwife came in, carrying the baby, neatly dressed and wrapped up, in her arms.

"Will you look at it, Miss?" she said, stopping near the bed.

"Yes; I guess I can stand it. Oh! oh!"

It had a sweet little white face, and blue eyes, but it was sadly deformed; it never could learn to walk, and that distorted, twisted spine, and the knot on the shoulder, were painful to look upon.

Mabel shuddered and turned away, saying, "Oh, if it lives, I never can hold up my head, for shame of the ugly, frightful little monstrosity! Oh, if she had only been a boy! But to think of a daughter! No one could ever love her, and she couldn't go out into society, and her life would be a burden and a curse to herself. She would rather have died at her birth, I know. If I had been born that way, I should have blamed those who gave me life, if, in mercy, they had not taken it the next hour. Why did you not let her die when

you saw how hideous she was!" said Mabel, with an expression of disgust marring her beautiful face.

The old hard-hearted hag drew near the bed and whispered, "It is not too late yet, Miss."

"How could you do it without suspicion?" whispered Mabel, a hard glow lighting up her face.

"Let her bleed to death," said the hag hoarsely, while she looked like a demon.

"Well; it would be best for the child, and better for all of us. When would you do it?" said Mabel.

The fiend hesitated, stammered, and then said, with a toss of the head, "It would be as well to ask what it could be done for! I can't work for nothing."

"Oh, of course, you should be amply rewarded," replied Mrs. Stanton, in an angry whisper.

"What will you give? You know I don't begrudge the job," said the old crone.

"Fifty dollars," said Mabel, huskily; "but it will not be a painful death, will it?"

"Just like falling asleep," said the hag, "and I'll do it for that sum;" and she turned away from the bed and sat in the embrasure of the window.

Mabel covered her head and feigned sleep, though she was thinking about satins and laces and moire antiques, and the late charming new style of shawls and cloaks.

In a moment a sharp cry from the baby sounded through the room. Then it cried and fretted less, and lower, and more brokenly, and soon it was still—and there was no noise in the silent chamber save the ticking of a little French clock that stood on the mantle.

In about half an hour, Charles came into the room, saying:

"Where's the little white pee-wee, Mabel? Have you become reconciled to it yet?"

"Oh! Charles, I am so exhausted; do go out, and let me sleep."

"Well, as soon as I see wee birdie, Mabel."

"But you shan't rouse the little thing, Charlie. She has just got it to sleep nicely, and when it cries it strikes so sharply into my poor head!"

"Oh, I'll just kiss its little white face—it is so much sweeter than Hammond was when he was little. He was rather coarse-featured, you mind. I was just speaking with Dr. Lambert about the baby, and he says he will call over this afternoon and see her. He says if she is healthy, she can be helped a great deal—her spine made straight, and that in the hands of a skillful surgeon her feet can be brought right again. Mabel, if I have to deny myself *bread*, I will do it, if it enables me to give my daughter a symmetrical form. Oh, my own precious little white lily! how much joy you will bring to the heart of your father! I believe we will call her *LILY*—the darling!" and he stepped toward the cradle.

"Come away!" shrieked the old woman, catching his arm as he bent down and lifted the covering from the tiny face.

"Oh! heavens! Mabel, it is gasping—dying! My child! my child!" and he snatched it out of the cradle, and as he did so, a sponge, saturated with blood, dropped soggly to the floor.

The quivering little distorted frame drew up—the little breast trembled out a soft long breath, and it fell back, limp as the soft muslin that covered it.

"Blood, Mabel! blood! What does this mean?" and he glared wildly into the pallid face of the old wretch who stood with her arms both reached up, as though stricken into stone.

"Wretch! what means this?" and he seized her shoulder with the vice-like clutch of a talon.

"She hired me to do it!" gasped out the midwife, pointing to the bed, and Mabel, frightened at the frenzied look of Charles and the confession of the woman, went into a convenient fit of hysterics.

Charles paid no attention to her, but sat down with the baby across his knees, and laid his hands on its breast, but no pulsation stirred there—the heart was still! The tears streamed down his face, and he rocked his body to and fro, as he thought of the fleeting dream that had filled his mind half an hour before. The vision of his old age, and a daughter, kind and loving and educated and full of goodness, with a mind above the frivolities of fashion—*this* beautiful dream had been swept away, even more transient than the morning dew.

When he looked up the hag was gone. He turned to the bed, and Mabel, weeping, reached out her beautiful little hand to his clasp. But he shook his head and turned away; then rose and laid the dead babe beside her.

"What have you to say in justification of this murderer, Mrs. Stanton?"

"It was best for the child, and,— Oh, forgive me, Charles; you will drive me distracted," and she reached out her arms to put about his neck, but he pushed them off.

"I am suffering the tortures of hell this minute! Had you not better, most philanthropic of your sex! plot with some

demon to take the life of your husband?" said Charles, sternly.

Then, looking around the room, to be certain there were none to hear him, he drew nearer and continued:

"It was you, vain, frivolous, worldly woman, who gave my sweet babe this distorted spine and feeble little frame, and these crooked limbs. How and why you did it, rests between yourself and the God who sits in judgment upon you. And then, instead of clinging to her with all a mother's holy affection, and devoting your life to her in penance, as you should have done, you plot with an old she-devil to take away the little life you gave so grudgingly and meanly! Mabel Stanton! I do look upon you with bitter hate and loathing of soul! You are no wife of mine henceforth. Oh, my babe! my babe! Look upon that soft, pure, angelic baby-face! She is ours—yours and mine. And you, the mother, in hatred, cut asunder that tender thread of life, and our daughter has gone to the angels. Our little LILY! Oh, my God, how can I bear this heavy burden of grief and pain and sorrow! It will eat into my soul like a canker, and the thought that my wife is a murderer, and that my own sweet child is the murdered victim, almost maddens me."

Mabel had gone off in another fit of hysterics, and he laid the babe tenderly in the cradle, and left the room.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"Oh, crooked world!" I cried, "ridiculous
If not so lamentable! It's the way
With these light women of a thrifty vice,
My Marian,—always hard upon the rent
In any sister's virtue! while they keep
Their chastity so darned with perjury,
That, though a rag itself, it looks as well.
Across a street, in balcony or coach,
As any stronger stuff might."

AURORA LEIGH.

JENNIE HOWLAND heard of the marriage of James Hamilton through his sister. It was her last hope of happiness, torn away from her with a sudden wrench; but she had learned to bear affliction bravely, and she scarcely winced under the penetrating eye of Mrs. Barnes, while she felt the intelligence drop like molten lead into her heart.

She was in Wendall then, and on her way home she stopped under the old tree where James had first seen her, sitting asleep. She felt as if death or annihilation would be a boon, if she could only woo it to her.

"And he, my father, has caused all this to come upon his only child; he has always stood between me and happiness—always kept the light away from me. He haunts me as the

demon, Remorse, haunts the murderer; and yet—I could love him if he was only a little better and would not repulse me with his freezing coldness.”

While she sat there, a poor woman, an outcast from society, who lived in an old tumble-down cabin with her two children, came along, and merely nodding her head shame-facedly, was passing on without stopping, when Jennie called to her:

“Won’t you sit down and rest awhile, Mrs. Gray?”

“Thank you,” said the woman meekly, as she came and sat down at Jennie’s feet, spreading out the old but clean skirt of her faded dress on the damp ground for her children to sit on.

“How do you get along now-days, Mrs. Gray?” said Jennie, kindly, as she bent over and tied up one of the shoe-strings in the little boy’s run-down shoe.

“Oh, the Lord blesses myself and children with good health, but *I can’t get any work to do*,” said the poor creature, bursting into tears and weeping aloud.

Poor, poor woman! that flood of tears had been pent up ever since early that morning, when Mrs. Lee had ordered her out of her house, and flung the drowsy little boy out after her, by the arm, saying she would rather put her sewing into the fire, than give it into the hands of a vile prostitute like her. She said she had far rather stick a keg of powder under her old cabin, and blow her and her brats into eternity, than give her a stitch of work to encourage her to stay in their neighborhood.

Jennie let her weep awhile. She knew it would do her good, and lighten her heart of its burden and its bitterness, and then she told her she must cheer up, that God was a

friend to the widow, and a father to the fatherless, and He would not forsake her. She said she would look around among the neighbors and try and find her plenty of work to do; and that after a while, she would get her to knit some fine white linen hose, and she would pay her in advance. She took out her purse; but the poor woman shook her head, and said she’d rather not take the money until she had earned it.

“Indeed, you will,” said Jennie, laughing cheerfully, “for it is probable I shall not have the funds to pay you so readily, when the work is done, as I have now,” and she made the woman take the last coin that was in her purse, a quarter-eagle.

“Oh, mother, won’t you buy some cakes like we saw in the shop window in Wendall? Oh, my! but they did look so soft and good, I could hardly quit lookin’ at ’em,” said the little boy, eagerly, as he stood upon his knees beside his mother.

“God bless you, Miss Howland!” said the poor woman. “You have put food into our mouths. We have had nothing but potatoes for three days; but if I could get work enough to keep me busy, I could live like a queen, and my children like princes. I want to make an honest living; but when my sister women spurn me from their homes of plenty, and withhold labor from me, and taunt me, what can I do only to save my dear little ones from starvation? Oh, it is dreadful to hear one’s own children cry for bread, and to keep it from them, when it can be obtained by stealing or—*crime*. I loathe myself, and sometimes I am tempted to take my own life, and theirs too. Oh! how could Mrs. Lee treat me so!

I knew her well when she was a girl. Her mother was a poor widow, and Juliet was obliged to work out to help maintain the family. She has spun wool and flax at my father's many a month. I wonder how she can be so hard-hearted and uncharitable."

"There are a great many weak-minded people, who forget the hard lessons experience taught them in their early years," said Jennie; "and there are others, who treasure up their series of trials, and it enriches their souls, and is of more value than countless wealth."

"Oh, yes, yes!" sighed Mrs. Gray.

"Have you not been at Mr. Lisle's in search of work?" asked Jennie.

"Yes; along in the fall I did a good deal of knitting for Mrs. Lisle, and quilted three comforts, and she paid me double what it was worth, too; and when I took the last of the work home, Mrs. Lisle was walking the floor, crying, and Mr. Lisle lay on the sofa, holding his head and groaning. Oh, they were in deep trouble about Alice, and I didn't ask for any more work, but slipped out unnoticed, and went home.

"Poor Alice! I do pity her so. I heard them say in the street this morning, when we stopped at the town pump for a drink, that Mr. Lisle had taken Alice to Niagara Falls, to raise and divert her spirits, and that they intended going from there to Virginia, where her grandmother lives. He is very kind to her, and I'm thinking that another life will be blest in these endeavors to cheer and comfort and elevate the mind of Alice. God bless that good old father! They say he is very thankful that it is no worse with Alice, and that she is spared to them with only this one great blight upon her young years.

Mr. Lisle says he has no doubt but it was the intention of that Carrol to murder her, and that either his heart failed him, or he did not have a favorable opportunity. Poor Alice! *she* is not one of those who will forget the hard lesson, learned from a bitter experience."

"No, indeed!" said Jennie; "and I am glad that Alice will be absent when her case will be brought up in the church. I am afraid she couldn't stand it."

"They can't exclude her, can they?" said Mrs. Gray.

"Oh yes, it will be done; and oh, dear! I cannot see how one church member can stand up with a bold face, prim and pharisaical, and say by his conduct to one who has had greater temptations than his little, narrow nature has ever been subjected to, temptation his contracted spirit could never measure or fathom or understand, or bear up under, 'stand down there; you are weak and erring, and not worthy, not fit to mingle with us, who are sanctified and holy.' Poor lambs, who have fallen into the mire, and among brambles, and whose flesh is torn and bleeding, and who are hungering for the fresh herbage, and thirsting for the limpid brooks, and panting in the twinkling heat of the noon-day sun, for the breezy shades that look so inviting, how can they cast them outside of the fold, and away from the tender care of the watchful shepherd!

"Oh, this is not in accordance with the teachings of the meek Saviour, who said, 'love one another,' 'bear one another's burdens,' 'see that ye fall not out by the way,' 'neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more;' there is none of Christ's forgiveness manifested in thus standing aloof from one, and withdrawing all fellowship, as though fearful of contamina-

tion, and casting odium upon another. The example of the great and good Father is disgraced, trampled upon and stigmatized. What hath made us one better than another? If it is wealth, or pride, or knowledge, then we are none of His; for He was meek and lowly, and exercised forgiveness to all.

"I think more than half the members of Glen Green church forgive Alice; although *I* can't see that *they* need have anything to forgive her. She has not injured them—the heaviest blow falls upon her own head; it is she who suffers most, and has the most to bear. They have no right to sit in judgment upon her, for there are not two members of that church who can properly sympathize with her, and appreciatively judge of the temptations she has undergone. I don't know of one woman in the Glen, who is capable of the great depth of affection that Alice is; not one who can love so devotedly, wholly and unselfishly and blindly as she; and of course *this* stamps them as unfit to pass judgment upon her. One might with the same propriety call on an ignorant nurse or dairy-maid to explain why the earth is a magnet, and then reverence her decision when she asserted that it really was not a magnet."

"Mrs. Lee says if Alice is retained in the church, she will leave it immediately," said Mrs. Gray; "and, Miss Howland, I never told it before in my life, since I came to the Glen to reside, but I will tell you, confidentially, for it seems to come up in my mind, as though I wanted to tell you about it.

"Mrs. Lee was a fair, handsome girl; when she was young she looked just as Grace does now; and she was unfortunate, and Mr. Lee was a member of the Masonic fraternity; and to

save disgrace to the girl, the Masons all got together in a private room, and talked it over, and Lee utterly refused to marry her. Three of the members then stood before him with loaded revolvers aimed at his breast, and gave him five minutes in which to make up his mind. He hesitated four minutes, then preferred to live; and Juliet was brought in, and a parson, and he married her with three six-shooters staring unwinkingly upon him, looking death out of their eighteen black sockets."

"It is just such women," said Jennie, "who will defame Alice, and tattle and trouble her, and look upon her as though her touch would bring leprosy. Just such will spurn her from them, and glance with contempt and suspicion on her. But when you meet with a woman of cultivated understanding, and high and liberal sentiments, and full of Christian charity and kindness and forgiveness, ready to make due allowance or difference between the warm, impulsive, enthusiastic lover of the true and beautiful, and for the cold, dull, yet animate clod of life, whose whole experience is the tape line with which he measures all other natures, and whose experience consists only in breathing and eating, such a woman will judge correctly and faithfully. And such a woman is a type of the reformatory class, that the world is in need of, hungering, thirsting, starving for. Lacking such, it is becoming—no better."

The two women rose to leave—Jennie to go home, and seek to forget James Hamilton in doing all she could for others, and thus giving the mind something else to do than to ponder and grieve and pine.

The poor widow left her children, as soon as she got home, and ran down to the grocery, and bought tea and provisions.

That evening one of her children was sick, and she went to her nearest neighbor, Mrs. Charles's, to buy or borrow a candle, for fear the child would be sick in the night.

"We do not keep candles to lend," was the cool reply.

"I want to buy one, if you please, then."

"We don't keep candles to sell, or give away, either," said Mrs. Charles, turning to go out doors.

"My little boy is sick, and I am afraid to be alone in the night with not a candle in the house," said the poor woman piteously.

"Well, the truth of the matter, Mrs. Gray, is this, if I must tell you, and I might as well tell it first as last. You see, I don't associate with ornary people. I'm a decent Christian woman, and a member of the church; and it is my duty to keep myself spotless from the world, as far as lies in my power. You are unworthy the notice of Christian people. The devil has bound you in his chains, and dragged you down to destruction. I won't uphold you in your wickedness, and I will be one of ten women, who will tear your house down over your head, and drive you out of the neighborhood, you vagabond, you!"

"Amen!" said the fussy little Mr. Charles, in a loud, solemn voice, looking up from the open Bible that lay upon his knees.

The reader will recollect that Mr. Charles is the officious little member who took such an active part at the meeting in which was discussed the propriety of admitting poor Ethel Clarke into the church.

Mrs. Gray stood meekly until the self-righteous neighbor had relieved her full heart of all she had to say commendatory of her own Christian piety, and condemnatory of the poor widow of whom she knew nothing, save hearsay, gleaned from her gossiping associates; then she went home, sad of heart.

"Alas, for the rarity
Of Christian charity!"

Mrs. Charles hurried and done up her work, dressed up clean and neat, and she and her husband walked down to the school house to the weekly evening prayer-meeting.

A woman could hardly go abroad among her neighbor women on a more exalted and unselfish errand, than did Jennie Howland when she went from house to house soliciting work and charity and sympathy, for the poor despondent widow.

And to the credit of our sex we are proud and happy to say, that with few exceptions, in the neighborhoods of Glen Green and Wendall, Jennie's arguments were listened to with deference; women who, through blinded zeal, were unwise and uncharitable, grew softened and merciful as they listened to the reasoning of the fair pleader, convincing them that they had helped to make Mrs. Gray what she was, and that the greater sin lay with themselves.

When the "light comes" to a woman, and she sees that she was wrong, or prejudiced, or partial, or falsely informed, how nobly does she retract her error and give "honor where honor is due!"

Jennie soon got the promise of plenty of work for the widow, and, better still, that they would treat her with sisterly kindness.

Mrs. Lee did not promise to send her any work; she said she would see about it; that, if she could get her mind reconciled about that passage of scripture which required Christians to keep away from unbelievers, and scoffers, and the ungodly, she might do something perhaps for her; but that her relation to the church was the most important thing to be looked after and guarded in her life. Yet, if the minister's wife and Mrs. Whitfield, and others who lived blameless lives, could befriend her with impunity, she thought she could; and if they could stand what people would say, she didn't know but she might.

The next evening Mr. Howland questioned Jennie closely about where she had been, and what she had been doing.

The poor girl, exasperated almost with the intelligence received of the marriage of James Hamilton, and feeling that the selfishness of her father was the cause of all her sorrows, and that he could not wrong her any more than he had already, resolved never to lie or equivocate any more, but strike out boldly and earnestly for the Right, let the result be what it would.

She told him about meeting with Mrs. Gray, and what she had done for her and intended to do.

His rage knew no bounds. He walked firmly across the floor backwards and forwards, his face livid with anger, cursing the hour that had ever given him such a daughter, and declaring that, before another fortnight would elapse, she should be the inmate of a lunatic asylum.

Jennie said no unkind word—it would have been wrong;

she let him chafe and rage; and in a few moments he took out his watch, looked at the time, and calling for his horse, as was his usual custom in extreme anger, he rode away.

Not till after midnight did Jennie retire to rest; plans for the future occupied her mind, and she tossed in bed until, through weariness, she fell asleep.

She dreamed that her father had grown kind to her, and that he looked up to and listened to her, and permitted her to lead him about, even as a little child is led, and that all her love for him, which had become cold and dead, now warmed into new life, and the links of the love-chain were bright and beautiful between the father and child.

Happy in this soft trance, so unlike the hard reality, she lay for a long time, when the muffled sound of a carriage, stopping at the gate, roused her. She raised the curtain and looked from the window, and could faintly distinguish people moving cautiously and silently, and not a word spoken aloud.

One man stood before the horses holding them by the bits, and another had opened the gate very slowly and quietly, and was keeping it open; while another was leading a horse away, that she recognized as her father's, to the stable.

This silent pantomime occupied perhaps five minutes, when she saw two men assisting some person out of the carriage, who seemed weak, or sick, or helpless, and dependent upon them for all help.

"There! steady!" said a low voice; "put your hand on my shoulder, sir;" and the person alighted down upon the ground.

"What can it mean!" thought Jennie; "they all act so strange and quiet, I should think they would call aloud to

waken us, if they are going to leave any one here;" and she held her hand close above her eyes, so she could see every movement, still she could not determine who any of the men were.

The man assisted out was then half led and half carried to the house, and seated in a rocking-chair that stood out on the porch. Then loud rapping upon the door followed; and while Jennie was hurrying on her dress, the two men returned to the carriage, and all drove rapidly away.

Jennie ran down stairs. A heaped-up figure was in the rocking-chair, breathing out, brokenly, such gusts of breath as does the swimmer, when breasting the strong tide. She walked up to the chair and stopped; the pattering of her bare feet had caught the attention of the figure, and he spoke in a voice broken into a plaintive, sobbing whine:

"Oh Jennie, Jennie! is it you, my child?"

"Father, father! what's the matter? Are you sick, or—" and she laid her hand on his up-turned forehead. She recoiled at the touch; the skin was wet with blood and perspiration, and clammily stuck to her hand.

"Oh father, tell me—tell me!" she cried.

"Jennie, my dear child, I can never—never look upon your face again. I am blind, Jennie; blind, blind! If it were mid-day, I could not see you. Oh God, how heavily thy just judgments do fall, and how severe they are!"

"Oh papa, is this true, or am I dreaming a frightful dream?"

"It is too true, Jane; a camphene lamp exploded while being filled, and the liquid fire fell into my face and eyes, and if I ever recover at all, it will be with the loss of my sight.

"Oh it is dreadful, dreadful! and the pain is so intense, I

could almost bear to take my life to be rid of this terrible misery!" and the sufferer leaned his head back and screamed like the terrific yell of a mad, wild beast.

Oh it was heart-rending to hear his frantic cries!

Mina lit a candle, and sent one of the hired men for a physician.

It was impossible to recognize in that torn and bleeding mass of a face, the stern, cold, blue eyes, and finely chiseled features, and the small mouth and earnest expression—they were all gone; the skin was brown and shriveled in places, and in others, hung in loose patches, dripping blood and water.

Jennie made a cool bed on a lounge, and led him to it, while Mina got some soft linen cloths ready for the physician.

His groans were affecting in the extreme.

Jennie cried like a poor babe, as she fanned him, and did all she could to allay the intense burning.

"Oh, Jennie, my child," he said, "don't cry for me so; it only increases my torture, for I don't deserve one tear from you."

"But, father, I have often spoken so harshly to you, and now it all comes up before me, and is almost more than I can bear. If I had always been good to you, it would be like a blessing to me now."

Nothing touched her more than to hear the soft, affectionate name, *Jennie*, fall from his lips. It sounded sweeter than music to hear it, instead of the short, curt, unloving word, *Jane*.

He had never called her Jennie before, and it did fall so sweetly into her heart; it drew her towards him like a loving arm.

The physician was a little inquisitive about finding out just how the accident happened; if there were any others injured; where Mr. Howland was at the time, etc.; but Jennie made him understand that the case was a critical one, demanding immediate attention, and if he could not proceed without delay, she would send for another physician.

Poor Jennie! she had long feared that her father was connected with a disreputable band, and the scene she had witnessed that night, confirmed, beyond a doubt, her worst fears. The manner in which he was brought home looked suspicious, but she resolved not to pain him by asking any questions.

When the physician asked if any other persons were injured, she replied that there was no other one in the study save him; that Mina and her had retired two or three hours previously.

Oh, it was pitiful to see that strong man writhe in agony, and fling his arms above his head, and smite his breast, and frantically call on God to end his sufferings. The groans were forced from him by excruciating pain; his eyes were literally roasted, and were burning like coals of fire in their sockets—red, and shrunken, and continually rolling.

Poor man! little thought he then of the claims of society, or of the proud old blood of English ancestors, that flowed in his veins like liquid fire; but like a bed of thorns was the remembrance of the past—every wrong deed came up and pierced him like an assassin's dagger.

Oh, he saw himself, even as God saw him; and he felt the justice of the providence that could not help but make him a better and a wiser man.

Jennie was his constant nurse and companion, through all

those long weeks of suffering; weeks in which he lay on the confines of eternity, a season of pain that clung to him like an avenging demon, although it was a ministering angel in disguise.

After a long time, he rose from his bed of pain, and his feelings were all changed towards his child. It was not in the heart of man to hate that sweet girl, after he had looked upon her entire devotedness to others, her self-denial, and purity, and goodness.

He felt that he owed much to the Father who had blest him so unmeritedly, with all good gifts; and he resolved to live a new life.

His sight was gone; all the world was dark as midnight; all the wondrous earth-beauty that had hitherto ministered so perfectly to his love of the beautiful, was gone, to the sense of sight; but he had been led unconsciously by this providence, and by Jennie, and those kind Christian friends of hers, into such a train of thought, that he did not estimate it as he would have done, had not the great light come that he might, with a fairer than an earthly vision, behold all things as they are.

Oh, it was well! God doeth all things well!

Mrs. Lisle had been to see him very often, and he had learned to love her; and Julia had staid a long time with Jennie, and assisted in taking care of him.

She would do all she could to make time pass pleasantly; sing, and play, and read to him, and she was so cheerful, too, that her very presence seemed a burst of sunshine when she came into the house.

Mrs. Lee came over twice, and Jennie told her father that was twice too often, for she would all the time be talking of what a dreadful thing it was to lose one's sight, and that one'd better be dead than to be such a burden on their friends; and that such unfortunate people generally closed their days in the alms-house on charity.

CHAPTER XXXII.

It was an evening in the bursting forth of the beauteous spring.

Wearing her garland of flowers, like a radiant angel, came the blooming month of May, bearing the crown of motherhood to the stricken Alice. She lay insensible, though the breath came and went with a faint flutter, like the feeble beating of little chilled wings. When she revived, she opened wide her eyes, as if starting from a dreadful dream, and whispered:

"Am I a mother yet?"

Cicely smiled, and nodded her head.

"Oh, mother, I am afraid I can't love it; is my babe a boy?"

"Yes, Alice; a little blue-eyed boy, perfectly beautiful, with full rounded limbs, and"—just then a feeble little wail broke upon their ears.

Alice flung out her arms impulsively, and a joyous thrill she had never felt before, played along her pulses, even to her finger ends, as she burst into hysterical weeping.

"I do love my child, mother, dearly, though I have never seen its face; bring it to me, my darling babe!"

And she reached out and took it in her arms, and laid it on her bosom, all the time weeping softly over it, and whispering,

"God gave you to me, babie. I was so lonely, and broken-hearted, and had none left to love me, and none for me to love. Like a burst of sunshine after a storm, did you come to us, darling. My God-given blessing! as I deal with you, so may my Father in heaven deal with me. Oh, Ernest! Ernest!"

"On this little sinless face, I lay the kiss that seals my forgiveness to you; and may God have pity and mercy on you, poor, homeless, unloved one, wandering up and down the earth, with the mark of Cain marring the spiritual beauty of your fair brow; seeking for rest where rest is not; seeking for peace, when it is no where on earth for you; winning happiness, which, when found, is like

'Dead sea fruits that tempt the eye,
But turn to ashes on the lips;'—

And the blessing of God went with Alice.

Like the light chaff blown away from among grains of wheat, were many of her summer friends, among whom were Ella Carter and Mattie Loring, the two girls who had stood with hands clasping hers at the wild-wood grave, and stood beside her at the baptismal font, and loved her as fervently as were their natures capable, until the rough blasts came, and the dark hours, heavy with storms,—then they turned away, lest disgrace should sully them.

So it is, with the poor loves and friendships of earth. Let the dark cloud of adversity but gather, and smiles will grow dimmer and cooler, and you will feel the warm hands loosing from yours, and the paths that lay from infancy side by side with yours, will diverge, and go away into sunnier places, and oh, if you have not a Father to whom you can go with your

burden of grief, and whose love never changes or grows cold, in these dark hours, then, indeed, will midnight darkness encompass your way, and the terrors of hell have hold upon you!

Mr. Lisle had never been a father but once. Alice was his only child, and it was with gratitude to God for such a precious gift, that he gathered his little grandson to his broad, warm bosom, and awkwardly caressed him.

He was named *Willie Lisle*, and this new tie was like another link, making him still dearer to the doating grandfather. And they were all very happy; happier for these trials undergone, and for the triumphs achieved.

How strange that we can distrust the Good Father, who knows what is best for us, and what will further our happiness in this life, and prepare us to enjoy the life to come; and yet, we weak mortals shrink away, and cry out piteously, "Oh, let this cup pass; it is so bitter!" as though we servants would be exalted above the suffering Lord, who was a "man of sorrows" and acquainted with grief.

Another year has passed away, full of changes.

To the home of Mabel Stanton it has brought a blight that is shudderingly looked upon by all who love the peace, and harmony, and holiness of home. Since the inhuman death of his baby-child, Charles has felt no affection for his wife. A barrier insurmountable has been raised, and, alas! that it is so, in so many homes all over our land, and in our populous cities; merely to keep up appearances, in the eyes of the

world, they live under one roof, but there is no tie binding them together.

Charles's mother occupies apartments in his house, and he spends his evenings with her, and takes his meals in her room, unless they have company.

People call Mabel beautiful, and accomplished, and social; but Charles is called moody, and selfish, and cold-hearted.

How little does the world know of things hidden behind the beautiful and the cold exterior of these two poor creatures!

Mabel lives in constant dread of exposure from the old woman, who was the instrument in her hands in taking the life of the babe; but thus far she has kept her quiet, by giving her money whenever she asked it. The influence of the old fiend is as tyrannical over Mabel, as is the potent power of fashion.

We hardly dare anticipate what the end will be.

Charles indulges in a glass of wine frequently, and the thirst is increasing on him. There is not a day in which the vision of his baby-daughter does not come up before him, with her sweet, pure, baby-face; sometimes when he is at the bar, pleading, and hundreds of eager, upturned faces are upon him, drinking in every word—even then his mind, with the swoop of an eagle, will come down to that scene in his wife's room, on that morning, and he will shut his eyes for a moment—a little moment—until the vision is flown.

His little son, Charlie Hammond, is precocious, a bright, handsome boy, and, for his poor father's sake, we hope he may be a blessing and a comfort. He seems to inherit much from his grandfather Hammond,—the same frank, bonest, cheerful disposition.

In her secret chamber alone, apart from all the world, Mabel often sits and thinks of her father, and sees that she did not do her duty towards him; and yet, on the other side, there were the claims of society, and so she closer hugs those chains, that make her more a captive than is the criminal in the state's prison, because she is triply held by a low, slavish fear, that is mean, and craven, and unworthy.

Mr. Howland has now been deprived of his sight a year, and, bless God, within that year he has learned to read the character and the nature, the pure, high, holy, self-denying nature of his daughter aright, and now he looks upon her as little below angelhood.

He had never learned this, had not that sore affliction come upon him, which drew him close to his child, and brought her to him in the capacity of nurse, companion, friend, counselor, and confidant.

He trusted a great deal of his business to her care, and he found her so upright, and true, and faithful, that often, in comparing his past life with hers, he has been tempted to cry out in despair, over the remembrance of wasted years, spent and gone forever, and no one made any better or happier in them.

There is a fair understanding now between father and daughter, on every subject, save the manner in which the accident happened that deprived him of his sight. From what Jennie is aware of, she had rather he would not tell her about it. She suspects that he was connected with the same band of counterfeiters that Ernest Carrol was, and that it was in compounding chemicals to make silver coin, that the accident

happened; probably they were in the hands of one who was a novice in the art of compounding, and that an explosion occurred which deprived her father of his sight.

There are strange, deep caves in the mountains, six or eight miles from Wendall, and it is presumed the counterfeiters had stated periods of meeting in some of those gloomy retreats.

Jennie is not lonely now. Her father sits in the arm-chair, or lies on the lounge, and she reads to him and talks with him; and Julia is there half the time, and will be until her marriage with Frank Phillips, in the coming autumn. Frank will have finished his course then and will go south, where a professorship is awaiting him in a popular college, in the same city where his brother is pastor of a large and wealthy church.

And the Whitfields?

The romantic Laura, who ran away with the foreign Count, learned in due time that she had married a tailor. He obtained employment in Lowell, but his own labor would not maintain them, and she was obliged to sew for the slop-shops. She did this for a long time without informing her parents, or letting her few acquaintances know of it. But she could not always keep it hid; and there was so little prospects of her ever reaching the aristocratic ranks in Lowell, that she wisely let the truth be known and came down stairs, and sat sewing by the open window as patiently as though bearing a cross, instead of a pleasure and an honor.

Metta was growing old, and was slighted by the gentlemen, and she resolved to try a new field and spend a winter with Laura. Her mother advised her to take a dose or two of cod liver oil every day and a small dose of arsenic every evening, to improve her form and clear and beautify her complexion,

before she should go to Lowell. Vain girl, and vainer mother!

She did as directed, and the evening before she was to leave home, after she had packed her trunks, and laid out her traveling dress and cape and bonnet on the table, ready to start with the earliest morning train, she took the arsenic as usual, only, with an increase of zeal, she increased the dose too much; and a paragraph, that has been going the rounds of the press, tells her fate.

She died before morning; the physician could not save her. And perhaps it is well enough that the world should be rid of such trivial women—vain things, who will peril their lives to insure a fair, clear complexion, caring not whether the poor soul be black or white, pure or sullied.

Laura had been the mother of two puny little babes, but she too, was vain, and cared more for the whiteness of her skin than the lives of her infants; and, as they drew sustenance from her full, fair white breasts, they drew also the poison, and it rankled in their blood and covered them with putrid sores, and their little reach of life grew narrower and narrower and more grudgingly given, and the innocent victims died—offerings on the altar of a shameless vanity, and ignorance and pride!

When the autumn came it brought home Frank Phillips from Cambridge, laden with college honors.

The meeting between him and his beloved Julia was tender and touching.

All the neighborhood nearly were invited to the wedding,

which was to be solemnized at Mr. Howland's. The house and garden and walks and beautiful grounds were fitted up for a "goodly companie," and the occasion was a joyous one. Frank's father performed the ceremony.

Jennie Howland was blithe as a bird, flitting hither and thither, making all comfortable and happy. Refreshments were abundant, so were laughing and singing and merriment, among the happy groups congregated in the rooms and porticoes and gardens. Mr. Howland had never been happier. Ah, so true it is that the secret of happiness lies all in having a heart at peace with God and the world—a heart void of offense, and unburdened with guilt, or crime, or wrong!

"Where's Jennie?" said little Mrs. Barnes, bustling from one room to another, and breaking in upon a dozen private conversations with her eager inquiry of—"Where's Jennie? Can't any body tell?"

"Here, here!" said Jennie, who stood quietly filling a basket with pies, cakes and confectionery, and giving it to the widow Gray, who had on her bonnet ready to start home.

"Why, don't go yet, Mrs. Gray!" said Mrs. Barnes, laying her hand on her arm kindly.

"I must; I left the little boys alone, and promised them not to stay any longer than until the ceremony was performed," said Mrs. Gray, looking very pretty in her neat, half-mourning dress, and little brown silk bonnet, trimmed with a fall of black lace.

"Could you make me a dress yet this week, a gray berage? it is to wear to another wedding, and I must have it if your time is not already engaged," said Mrs. Barnes.

"Thank you; I will try and make it if you bring it over

early to-morrow morning. Oh, I get just as much work as I can do now!" she continued, smiling; "and we live so happy, and have plenty of all kinds of comfort."

"I am so glad!" was the reply, as they bade the widow a kind "Good night;" and she started home.

"Let us walk out, Jennie," said Mrs. Barnes, drawing her arm within her own, and leading her out of the crowded room, down through the garden, past little groups of merry ones, then through the gate. Not a word was spoken, and Jennie felt the arm on which hers rested, trembling and twitching nervously. Mrs. Barnes walked on until she came to the old oak by the road-side, where Jennie always stopped to rest. She paused, and a gentleman, tall and pale, with marked features, stood leaning against the tree. The moonlight fell full upon his figure; he was dressed in black, and wore a wide crape on his hat.

Jennie was startled, and, bowing slightly, stepped back; but Mrs. Barnes threw her arm around her, and, with a voice broken with a crushing weight of tears, said:

"Oh, Jennie, your long night has fled, and your day is just dawning!"

"Jennie Howland—dear Jennie! don't you recognize me?" said the gentleman, taking off his hat and extending his hand.

The broad white brow, on which the moonlight fell so brightly; the soft, full, manly voice—ah, she knew then! and grasped his hand in both of hers and cried aloud, mingled tears of joy and sorrow. Both were embarrassed, and hardly knew what to say. That minute of silence was fraught with great eloquence!

Mrs. Barnes stole away to take Jennie's place, as hostess of

the evening, while James and Jennie sat down under the old oak.

"I was very lonely, Jennie; my wife died five months after our marriage, and my mother was in poor health, and I felt so unhappy I thought I should love to visit this dear old place again; and, Jennie, dear Jennie," he whispered, "oh, I so yearned to look upon your sweet face again, and be near you!"

Poor Jennie! He drew her to his bosom, and she wept, unrestrainedly, such tears of joy and gratitude, as went up to heaven like a great prayer of praise, to the good God who had loved her so truly through all her trials, and made her day to dawn so brightly.

And there they sat, conversing, until Mrs. Barnes came out to tell them that the company would disperse in an hour, and that they had better adjourn until the next day.

"She is mine," said James, leaning over and whispering to Mrs. Barnes.

"Dear Jennie, I always thought you and James were meant to be one, and it has ever been the wish of my heart that you might be. My blessing goes with you both!" and she held their hands in hers, and tried to keep back the rising sobs.

James kissed Jennie a lingering "Good night," and went to Wendall, while the women went back to the house.

On the way, Mrs. Barnes told her she had this plot made ever since she had heard of Jessie's death, for she knew that James had always loved her by the letters he wrote.

Jennie did not wait for the assembly to depart before she would acquaint her father with the glad tidings, but she stole up to him, where he sat conversing with Parson Phillips and Mr. Lisle, and laid her hand softly on his shoulder.

He knew the touch, and, turning around, said: "Well, what is it, daughter?"

She put her face to his ear and whispered the news.

"Thank heaven!" he said fervently, "the greatest sorrow is lifted off my life."

The next day an infair was held at Parson Phillips's. Jennie preferred staying at home with her father and James, but Frank and Julia would not consent; and the latter at last prevailed on Mr. Howland to ride with Frank and her in the carriage. He was assisted in, and the winsome Julia would sit nowhere else only at their feet, on a cushion. This caused great merriment among the young people, who joked Julia about her excessive humility.

The next week Frank and his bride started to Mississippi, where, as principal of a college, he took upon himself his great life-work, assisted by his accomplished wife, who labored earnestly in the noble cause of education, side by side with her devoted husband.

Late in the autumn-time James Hamilton and Jennie Howland were united. She was a lovely bride!

"Pygmalion's statue never seemed
More charged with life than she with love!
The pearl-tint of the early dawn
Flushed into day-spring's rosy hue—
The meek, moss-folded bud of morn,
Flung open to the light and dew—
The first, and half-seen star of even
Waxed clear, amid the deepening heaven—
Similitudes, perchance, may be!"

James could hardly believe the lovable old father of Jennie's could ever have been the cause of so much trouble to the gen-

the girl he called his bride; but, in his joy, he freely forgave him the great wrong, and blessed God for the happiness that crowned him with supremest joy.

Mr. Howland would not permit James to go back again to the slavish drudgery of a life among the green pine woods of Michigan, but made a deed of a handsome property in Wendall, which he gave him; then he made another of the beautiful homestead they occupied, that lay half way between Glen Green and Wendall, and gave it to Jennie in her own name.

James and his wife went to Michigan and settled up his affairs there, and brought his mother and Rosa home with them.

Jennie craved, as a privilege, that she might be permitted to erect a tombstone at the grave of James's wife. It was a plain marble slab, bearing only the inscription:

OUR DEAR LITTLE JESSIE.

"BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART, FOR THEY SHALL SEE GOD."

"When Alice's little Willie Lisle was three years old, Julia wrote for her to come and spend a winter in the pleasant city, where they resided, and where the winters were so summery and delightful.

And she said if she felt as though the time would pass wearily, she could teach a class or two for Frank, as he needed another assistant.

Cicely urged her to go; so did her father. But the sweetest of cares stirred at her heart. The little child, with the golden curls and rosy cheeks, made her shake her head as though it

were impossible to loosen the tie away from her heart, and be separated from him.

"I think the visit would do you good, Alice," said her father. "The time would soon pass in Julia's society; and we could write twice a week, and tell you about Willie."

At last Alice concluded to go if her mother would write three times a week, and if Willie got sick, send for her.

Cicely promised faithfully, and Alice went. She had not been there long, before she was installed into one of the departments as a teacher. The employment was new and pleasant and profitable.

Nearly every letter she received from home contained a scrawl made by Willie with a pencil, at the bottom of the page. He would tell his grandfather what he was writing, to "ma-Allie," and then he would interpret it for him. This was always the best part of the letter to Alice, and she would kiss the crooked marks that his little unsteady hand had made, and cry over them tears of joy and gratitude.

Frank and Julia lived in the parsonage, and Louis boarded with them, and preached every Sabbath. He was a high-souled, eloquent man. None of the chains that bound his father had ever fettered him: if he knew what was just and right, he did not shrink from advocating it.

Thrown daily in the society of Alice, and knowing all she had passed through, and the high resolves that had borne her up, he could not help but deeply respect her as a noble and injured woman—one sanctified through suffering.

Her parents wrote her if she was pleased with her employment, she had better stay and spend the summer there too.

Frank did not know how to spare her, or to fill her place,

and Julia interceded warmly, and she concluded to stay till autumn.

Details are tedious,—and we will glide over the pleasant summer, and in the autumn time find her the betrothed of Louis Phillips.

She had vowed religiously never to marry—never to give her poor wreck of a heart into any one's keeping—never to lay her sullied hand as a bride in any man's hand. Nor could any ordinary man have ever won Alice Lisle. But Louis was superior—he was talented and good and noble; and worshiped only the true and exalted; and he deemed Alice as worthy a woman as though she had never taken to her bosom a serpent. And reluctantly did she consent that he might accompany her to Glen Green, where their nuptials would be solemnized by his father.

Oh, it is a cross to a woman whose soul is stained, to listen to the words, that come up like remembered music, "*I love you!*" No wonder Alice shuddered and wept to hear them again.

When the cars passed the old maple on the bluff, Louis leaned over that Alice might not see out. She saw and understood the mute expression of tenderness, and looked up into his face as though she would speak the thanks that filled her heart.

She hardly recognized her beautiful boy in the little fellow who stood holding the gate open, with the wind catching up the shining curls from his sweet face, and his white collar turned down from about his plump neck, that had all the winsome sweetness of dimpling babyhood.

They were married beside the fountain where Alice was

baptized years before. But few friends witnessed the ceremony.

Alice took Willie Lisle away with her, but mother Phillips would not let Louis take his little May from her. Alice promised when Frank and Julia came to the Glen on a visit, the following spring, to send Willie back to his grandfather Lisle's to stay a year. Before she left to return South, she purchased the stone for the wildwood grave, that Mattie and Ella and she had agreed to do, and went with her father and mother to see it placed properly. There was no inscription on it save the simple words:

"MY TEACHER."

She told Cicely she had bought it for her sake, and that it was her tribute to her dear teacher. Cicely thanked her warmly for this token of affection.

After Louis and Alice went back, they spent a week in visiting the public institutions, taking Willie with them. They visited the Lunatic Asylum, and the Blind, and Deaf and Dumb, and House of Refuge, and lastly the State's Prison.

Willie was deeply interested, and made touching remarks about the poor men to "ma-Allie," as he called her.

They had gone through nearly all the work-shops, and Alice and Louis were standing beside a loom, where a young convict was weaving gay-colored carriage trimming, when Alice missed Willie, and walked back a few steps to find him. Just inside the door of another department stood a tall, pale, middle-aged man, polishing stirrups. He had a heap of them lying before him, and Willie had stopped and was peeping at

his reflected face in them, when he looked up, and seeing his mother, called out to her in his clear, merry, ringing tones :

"Oh, mamma-Allie! come and see the lots of Willie Lisles."

She smiled and took his hand, and to please him, bent down to look at the "Willies," when the stirrup the convict was polishing fell to the floor, and he suppressed a groan with difficulty. She looked up into his face, and—it was Ernest Carrol! Oh, heavens! what a shriek, long and piercing, bursting from lips as white as the lips that were yesterday covered by the green sod in the old churchyard.

Louis chanced to look up and saw her fall within the door; but by the time he had reached her, the convict had lifted her in his strong arms, and reached her out, and tenderly laid her in the arms of her frightened husband.

As Ernest turned to go away, he stooped and kissed Willie thrice, and then, without looking back, hurried away to the sick room, and flung himself on a cot, and with a groan as though his soul was torn with bitter memories, he buried his face in the pillow, and thus suppressed his emotion.

Alice was carried out into the open air, when she revived, and was taken home in a carriage. She did not leave her bed for a week, and no one, not even Louis, ever knew why she fainted, save that the work-shops were illy ventilated, and were so warm on that day.

Alice read in the daily papers that on the evening after that painful occurrence, one of the most desperate counterfeiters, by the name of Slade, *alias* Winters, *alias* Carrol, had made an attempt to leap down over the iron railings, that served for banisters to the flights of stairs that led to the upper sleeping

cells, but was prevented by the timely interference of the vigilant guardsmen. The paper said if he had succeeded in throwing himself over the railing, he would have fallen fifty feet, and struck on the solid stone floor, which would have dashed him to pieces.

Two days after that, she read in the daily papers that the same desperate man had escaped from the prison, leaving behind him a letter, saying that he was resolved to live an honest, upright life, and hoped they would not pursue him; for so surely as God spared him, would he strive to efface the unhappy past, by doing all the good he could, and living the life of a Christian. The tone of the letter was so earnest that it touched the heart of the Warden, and he forbade pursuit.

Fervently do we pray God that Ernest Carrol was sincere, and that the Recording Angel may write down against the name of the poor perjured man great good, and much!

The green shore is reached; but before we close, we must tell of the blessing that was in store for Jennie's father.

A friend of his in Boston, who had received great benefit from a successful oculist there, wrote to him, soliciting that he would come to the city and submit to an operation on the eyes. He went: the oculist found a nerve in one of his eyes which was connected immediately with the sight, as sound and as good as ever; the other was dead. The operation was performed, and one eye was restored, almost wholly, to its usual sight.

Oh, how earnestly did that old man kneel down and bless God for the precious gift!

He came home, praising God, and felt so young and well

again, that in less than six months he proposed marriage to James Hamilton's mother, was accepted, and with Rosa added, they make a new household.

That one fine inlet into his soul, the love of the beautiful, is now enlarged, and all the world and all therein, is very beautiful and very good to him now. Most beautiful of all though, he thinks, is his little granddaughter, Ruby, a wee little creature, who coos and laughs, and begins to know who grandpa is, and would rather stay at grandma Howland's than at home in Wendall.

James took up the study of law again, and was admitted to the bar last spring. Jennie is as happy a wife as can be.

And now we leave them. The farewells have been spoken, the parting hands taken, the truth faithfully but crudely told, by one who deeply loves and holds in reverence the true and good and just and beautiful and right. And with a frail hand laid lovingly, and in a spirit of kindness and meekness, in yours, dear reader, we leave you, asking as a benediction, the blessing of the dear Father to rest upon you and yours, and to prosper you in all good. Farewell.